

5-2010

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**Shedding Light on Roman Social Life
An Integrative Approach to Domestic Space at Pompeii and Karanis**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for High Honors

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Williamsburg, VA
April 28, 2010

Chapter 1:

artior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum

Much scholarly interest in ancient Rome has focused on the world of Roman elite men: their writings, their objects, and their activities. This bias in favor of the male aristocratic class, and the cultural and political center of Rome, is inescapable to a certain degree. Our traditional sources were created and controlled by the very elite men whose lives we use them to illuminate. These literary resources, therefore, can be highly selective and at times misleading, presenting only what their authors wished to be known about them. Of course, these urban *patres* - who received their beneficiaries, wrote of their affairs, and commissioned works of art - did not form the entire population of the Roman empire, nor did their interests concern the majority of Romans. By enabling the creation of more lasting artifacts, that is published texts and enduring monuments, they are simply more visible to us than the multitude of Romans who were illiterate and had fewer resources.

But who were these average Romans who formed the bulk of the population of settlements throughout the Roman empire? Answering this deceptively simple question is a difficult step which must be taken in order to understand the daily life of Romans and their place in society. In this thesis, I aim to do so not by relying on a constructed “typical Roman viewer¹,” but rather by examining the actual residents of Roman cities – even if they must remain anonymous – as well as the spaces in which they lived. The methodological goal of this work is to undertake the examination of houses and

¹Many studies of domestic space, especially those interested in decoration, invoke this type of generalized viewer. They often focus on the position of the *paterfamilias* and his elite guests. The decoration of dining rooms, for instance, is often discussed with respect to the view afforded each guest from his respective seat (c.f. Clarke 1991).

households using every type of available evidence in combination. By supplementing literary sources with other data, it is possible to dig deeper, investigating issues of community, individual occupation and subsistence, and the emotional and economic bonds of kinship. Rather than starting from the top of society, I will analyze the workings of Roman communities on a very basic level – people of all social classes, ages, and genders; their interactions with each other; and the spaces in which these occurred.

Recent researchers have started to address the problem of daily life, often by utilizing evidence the worth of which was previously unrecognized. Funerary monuments and their inscriptions have been used to reconstruct kin networks and to illuminate the kinds of relationships Romans had and valued (e.g. Saller & Shaw 1984). Petersen (2006) has used these inscriptions, in addition to non-elite art and literary sources to examine the class of freedmen (*liberti*, or ex-slaves) in ancient Rome. Social class in general has become a much more common topic in Roman scholarship, and it is approached from various perspectives. D’Arms (1981) examines non-elite freedman and equestrian businessmen using a social-historical lens, mostly through literary sources. The evidence used in these studies often presents the same problem in perspective as elite literary works. Funerary monuments and epitaphs are especially difficult to work with, as they were created by kin for the purpose of representing the deceased in a specific way, often with reference to culturally-specified normative roles. The literary sources used to reconstruct the non-elite perspective in fact present the elite view of other classes, often by stereotyping them². Thus, these common sources mainly serve to uphold a normative view of the lower classes heavily influenced by elite men.

² Petronius’ Trimalchio, from the *Satyricon*, surely fits this category, though his character has often been used as an example of a wealthy freedman.

Work on Roman houses, as the physical setting for much of daily life, has also expanded. Scholars have moved beyond interest in extravagant villas and expensive frescoes removed from their contexts to more holistic analysis of decoration in its context (e.g. Bergmann 1994 and Clarke 1991), exploration of the composition of entire city blocks (Wallace-Hadrill 1994), and examination of individual houses across the empire (e.g. Hales 2003 and Laurence & Wallace-Hadrill 1997). These efforts still tend to give an elite perspective, as more elaborate homes were often given more attention in excavation and thus the evidence for these is more accessible. Nevertheless, all of these examples, and other work in a similar vein, are productive steps towards a more complex and more accurate understanding of the composition and functioning of Roman society.

Sources which have been used less frequently can more closely illuminate the daily life of average Romans. Parkin (1992) uses tax documents, skeletal remains, and ancient demographic sources to discuss the structure of the Roman population throughout the empire at all levels of society. Penelope Allison (e.g. 2001) has called for a re-evaluation of written sources for domestic life and a renewed focus on archaeological evidence, especially individual contextualized artifact assemblages. The evidence drawn from these sources consists mostly of data which present far less bias, often not having been created with the purpose of constructing an ideal representation. While research using archaeological and other less traditional sources can be difficult due to problems of preservation and recording, in addition to requiring different methods in analysis and interpretation, this type of work is extremely valuable as a window into daily life and the reality the of Roman world.

What characterizes a majority of these inquiries is a tendency to privilege one type of material, or to use one kind of evidence exclusively. In order to more fully mitigate source bias, however, it is helpful to expand our view and to consider all of the evidence together. Only when all available sources are integrated can a reasonably complete knowledge of Roman domestic life and community be built. Thus, in this thesis, I will attempt to incorporate every avenue of research which can illuminate life in Roman society by using literary sources, private documents, house remains, and artifact assemblages. I will first discuss the formation of Roman communities from smaller groups which center in the domestic sphere by using more traditional sources. After this, I will proceed to apply this perspective to two different Roman settlements, their households, and their houses.

A Community of Households

The most basic group into which the individuals of a society are arranged is the kin or household group. The bonds of kinship were important to Romans, both emotionally and in terms of the organization of support. The sense of *pietas*³ - obligation to one's family, country, and gods - is common in both the ancient sources and in modern scholarship. From the very beginning of the *Aeneid* (1.10), for instance, Vergil stresses the fact that Aeneas was distinguished by his *pietas* ("*insignem pietate*"). He displays this quality by respecting the gods, honoring his father, and leading his people well (Hahn 1931: 10-11). Parkin (1997: 124) characterizes familial *pietas* as a reciprocal obligation, expressed in financial and personal care, between parents and children, but notes that practice often deviated from this ideal.

³ Dixon (1992: 27) defines this loosely as "general family feeling," in her discussion of the uncommonly detailed eulogy known as the *Laudatio Turiae*, though *pietas* extended beyond the kin group. It is summarized in the Oxford Classical Dictionary as "dutiful respect."

It is clear from funerary inscriptions and other writings, however, that a sense of duty was not the only feeling which tied kin together in Roman culture; “the family was...a focus of emotional satisfaction for Romans (Dixon 1992: 29),” extending beyond the common focus on respect and obligation. The time spent with one’s family at home was represented as a pleasant respite from the cares of the public world. Cicero (*Att.* 1.18), for instance, claimed that he only enjoyed rest (*requies*) when he was with his family (“*cum uxore et filiola et mellito Cicerone consumitur*”), which reward or benefit (*fructus domesticus*) was lacking in the forum. Although marriages were often arranged by the *paterfamilias*⁴, affection and love were considered ideal between husbands and wives: Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 4.19) extols his third wife’s love for him among her virtues⁵ and describes the interest in literature she cultivated due to her affection for him (“*quod ex mei caritate concepit*”) as an example of the domestic harmony (*concordia*) between the two. It is clear, therefore, that families and households were the basic organizational units of society in the ancient world, in terms of both emotion and obligation.

The difference between a household and a family is often difficult to articulate, and is complicated by the fact that our modern conception of “family” likely has no equivalent in the Roman world (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 92). While there could be variation across different areas of the empire⁶, Roman families seem for the most part to have been organized into intimate nuclear groups who lived together. As Saller (1997: 7) notes, however, little attention has been paid in the past to extended kinship in the Roman

⁴ Defined in the Oxford Latin Dictionary as both the head of the family and the householder, this was usually the father of a kin group. He held *potestas*, or ideally complete control, over his dependents.

⁵ She is also cunning and frugal, but the fact that she loves him is a sign of her fidelity and purity (“*castitatis indicium est*”) (*Ep.* 4.19).

⁶ This potential for regional variation creates a stronger need for expanding the geographic focus of research on Roman domestic life. In addition, other sources may exist in different areas of the empire, such as papyrus documents in Egypt, which allow us further insight and alternate perspectives.

world⁷; he attempts to treat this issue linguistically, by examining the variety and use of terms in Latin for relatives. Through this work, he suggests, for instance, that the Roman father's *potestas*, or the extent to which his control over children and other dependents was absolute, may have been exaggerated in earlier scholarship. In fact, other relatives such as the *patruus* (father's brother) could exercise the right in certain situations and was viewed to have moral authority in the family group. (Saller 1997: 33-34)

Roman kin networks often extended further than blood relations. The Latin term “*familia*” was first and foremost a legal institution which was not necessarily congruent with the natural or biological family and only applied to Roman citizens. The concept was closely, if not exclusively, linked to property inheritance and legal control of dependents⁸. According to a section of the *Digest* based on the 2nd century C.E. jurist Ulpian:

iure proprio familiam dicimus plures personas, quae sunt sub unius potestate aut natura aut iure subiectae... pater autem familias appellatur, qui in domo dominium habet, recteque hoc nomine appellatur, quamvis filium non habeat: non enim solam personam eius, sed et ius demonstramus.

Strictly by law, we call a family (*familia*) several persons who are subjected to the power (*potestas*) of one man, either by nature or by law...Moreover, the man who has rule (*dominium*) in the house is called the father of the family (*paterfamilias*), and he is called by this name rightly, although he may have no son: for we are referring not only to his person, but to his right. (Dig. 50.16.195.2, my translation).

The *familia* was legally defined as a group consisting of the father and his legitimate children, as well as further generations of children through the male line. Though adult sons would eventually form *familiae* under their own *potestas*, related individuals were

⁷ He defines “extended kinship” as “relationships with those who are related but live outside the household, particularly aunts, uncles, and cousins (Saller 1997: 7).” Clearly families and households are quite intertwined in the minds of modern researchers, perhaps because they often overlapped.

⁸ According to the Oxford Latin Dictionary, the term could also be applied to the collective slaves of a household, an estate and household possessions, and to biological relations.

considered to be a *familia* in a more general sense if they had issued forth from the same house and kin group (“*ex eadem domo et gente prodita sunt*”). This is to say, Roman ideas of relatedness were tied not only to blood and law, but also to residence and property. This partially explains the expansive nature of Roman family networks. People lacking the bond of biological kinship could become members of a *familia* through adoption, which was often inspired by concerns of inheritance or to create bonds between separate *familiae*. (Gardner 1997: 35) In addition to this, Romans were in general “more willing to admit foster parents, servants, apprentices, nurses, and pedagogues to special relationships which closely resembled those of kin (Dixon 1992: 162).”

Many Romans were not able to form legal *familiae* for various reasons. Slaves did not have the right to marry (*conubium*); any children born while either parent was a slave were considered to be illegitimate (Gardner 1997: 37-8). Slaves who were legally manumitted became Roman citizens, and could proceed to form true *familiae*. Many slaves in Italy were freed informally, however, through processes which conferred Latin rather than Roman status; even the freeborn children of these *Latinae Iuniani* had a similar status to illegitimate children. While it was possible for these people to acquire Roman citizenship, this was quite difficult, making it likely that many such families existed without legal rights of inheritance and *potestas*. (Weaver 1997: 56-58) Soldiers were likewise not permitted to marry, causing them to suffer from the same legal issues (Dixon 1992: 55). Both slaves and soldiers, however, often had *de facto* “marriages” (*contubernia*) and created unofficial families (Dixon 1992: 53).

In the *de Officiis*, which was written for the benefit of his son, Cicero expounded on the importance of family relationships and households in the construction of the wider community:

artior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum...prima societatis in ipso coniugio est, proxima in liberis, deinde una domus, communia omnia; id autem est principium urbis et quasi seminarium rei publicae. sequuntur fratrum coniunctiones, post consobrinorum sobrinorumque, qui cum una domo iam capi non possint, in alias domos tamquam in colonias exeunt.

Truly the connection of the union of kin is closer...The first of bonds is in marriage itself, next in children, then within a single house, with everything held in common; moreover this is the foundation of the city and is just as the nursery of the state. The connections of brothers and sisters follow and afterwards those of paternal and maternal cousins, who, they can no longer be held in one house, go out into other houses as if they were going into colonies. (Cicero, *Off.* 1.53-54, my translation.)

As Cicero explains, the biological ties brought about by procreation, which is practiced by all living creatures (*"natura commune animantium"*), cause social bonds to arise between humans. An emphasis on physical closeness is evident throughout the passage. The adjective *propinquus* can be used substantively to mean "kin," as it is most often translated in this case (c.f. Miller: 57), but its primary meaning is more related to spatial nearness and may be translated as "neighboring" in English [OLD]. Cicero also stresses the co-residence of family members within a single dwelling (*una domo*); the house and those living within in form a unit, from which new, but related, households spring.

Cicero continues to explain more thoroughly how these relationships function to unite people:

Sequuntur conubia et affinitates, ex quibus etiam plures propinqui; quae propagatio et suboles origo est rerum publicarum. sanguinis autem coniunctio et benivolentia devincit homines et caritate; magnum est enim eadem habere monumenta maiorum, eisdem uti sacris, sepulchra habere communia.

Marriages and their resulting relationships follow, from which even more relations follow; from which propagation and progeny is the source of the state. Moreover, the union of blood connects men by both good will and affection; for it is of great value to have the same ancestral monuments, to perform the same rites⁹, and to have common tombs. (Cicero, *Off.* 1.54-55, my translation.)

In this section, Cicero discusses what it is that produces social bonds from the biological and spatial bonds of kinship, which are necessary in order to form a state. He first mentions the feelings between relations; these seem, in his opinion, to be inevitable consequences of the union of blood (*sanguinis coniunctio*). He then explains why such affection (*caritas*) exists within families. The emotional bonds spring from shared activities, such as religious duties, as well as from family memory, represented in tombs and monuments. Thus, physical locations, both funerary and domestic, are important in the creation and maintenance of such ties.

The term household denotes a somewhat different, but often closely-related division, from the biological or emotional “family.” Defined somewhat generally, a household is a co-resident group, which may or may not also be familial, which “to some degree, share[s] household activities and decision making” (Blanton 1994: 5). Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 92) notes that the categories of family and household are often conflated. Both modern scholars and past people, such as census-takers, have been interested in physically-defined groups¹⁰, though he points out that dividing households solely based on the house itself is problematic, as a given co-resident group may in fact have been

⁹ The Loeb edition translates this as “domestic rites” specifically. While Cicero’s term is ambiguous, it is likely Miller’s assumption that he was in fact referring to the familial rituals that took place in domestic spaces is in fact correct, further emphasizing the tie between kin and house in the Roman mind.

¹⁰ The medieval Tuscan document he cites as an example grouped “all those who stay and sleep together in one and the same residence and who survive on the same bread and wine (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 92),” for example.

unrelated in any other way¹¹. Often modern scholars do not consider the possibility of houses occupied by tenants, rather than “owner-occupiers” with large household groups of either extended family or slaves. (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 103)

Households may also be viewed as economic units, though this aspect of domestic culture is difficult to study in the literary sources commonly available, as elite Romans tended to disdain business and trade in their writing (c.f. Cicero, *Off.* 1.150-151). While the city of Rome is commonly represented by modern scholars as a “consumer city,” which imported everything necessary for the maintenance of its people from elsewhere (Morley 1996: 5-7), the situation in other Roman settlements was likely characterized by a mixture of local trade, importation, and private production. Households were the locus of a large amount of the production that took place in Roman settlements, both in a domestic sense (e.g. cloth production for household use) and in an “industrial” sense (e.g. workshops located in houses). Both small farms and elite estates aimed for self-sufficiency in addition to a potential profit-making surplus (Morley 1996: 75), in order to maintain the residents of the farms, whether slave labor or free owners.

Houses were also a foundational setting for social life. The importance of the home in Roman social life is evident in the organization of the ritualized *salutatio*, in which an elite Roman man (*patronus*) would be visited by his clients at home each morning before proceeding to the Forum to engage in more public political business. Elite Roman houses were intentionally conspicuous and fairly open to visitors; the house was used by a *paterfamilias* as “a visual framework for his civic status (Leach 2004: 19).” Social hierarchies and relationships were elucidated spatially within the household.

¹¹ This variant, which is quite difficult to see in the historical or archaeological record, is known as a “houseful.”

While *clientes* were presumably quite limited in their mobility within the house, closer friends (*familiares*) of the *paterfamilias* may have been treated less like outsiders than other *amici*. While slaves, as residents of the house, were “insiders,” they were relegated to certain areas of the house at certain times; for instance, they may have had separate quarters for sleeping, and certain areas, such as the kitchen, were more “servile.”

(Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 38-39)

Investigating Roman Households

It is not possible to learn about Roman domestic life through direct means – to question the people about their own customs, living arrangements, and work. Since we cannot approach ancient Romans with ethnographic methods, other sources are necessary. Archaeological research can mitigate some issues in the study of the Roman world. The elite male bias of Latin written sources is not present in the archaeological record; the limits on this material are set rather by quality of preservation and excavation standards. Literary works suffer from the fact that we often cannot be certain of the purpose for which they were written, nor can we know how closely the picture painted by the author matches reality. In archaeology, conclusions are characterized by the interpretations of the researcher alone, rather than being colored intentionally by the creator of the source.

In spite of the issues inherent in the use of written sources, they should not be ignored; they are undoubtedly our best evidence for the opinions and values of certain individual Romans (c.f. Nevett 1997: 285-286). It must be recognized, however, that literary works present a limited view. Thus, they should be used critically and carefully, in addition to other sources which can provide information lacking in a strictly

documentary approach. The identity of the authors and their interests must be taken into consideration, in addition to the audiences for whom they wrote. It should also be understood that written sources may or may not correlate to the reality of life in the Roman empire, especially for people of a lower class than the elite Roman authors whose works are available to us.

Many potential sources of information relating to Roman domestic life have traditionally been given little prominence, as works of literature and certain material remains such as paintings have been privileged. Less commonly-studied documentary evidence, such as census documents, may be used to discuss the overall demography of a given region, and sometimes to illuminate the structure of kin groups. While archaeological remains such as artifacts have previously been ignored, misplaced, and misidentified, Allison (e.g. 1997:122) has called attention to the utility of these items to identify domestic activities and their spatial distribution within the house.

In this thesis, I will examine houses and households at two roughly contemporary Roman sites, Pompeii on the Italian peninsula and Karanis in Egypt's Fayoum region, with a focus on the way in which these units function in the community on a larger level. Each chapter will begin with a wide view of the region in question, before narrowing to general kinship and domestic culture, and ending with case studies of individual houses, in order to provide a physical setting for the lives and interactions of the people. I will examine each particular building as a coherent entity, and treat all of the available evidence. By using entire specific houses as my unit of analysis and paying attention to all of the remains, I will be able to discuss more thoroughly each case study as a lived

space and to highlight the variability and complexity which characterizes Roman domestic space.

Chapter 2:

The City of Pompeii

The metropolis of Rome itself, due to its long history and thus extensive construction, provides very little physical evidence for domestic life in the Roman empire. Scholars with an interest in Roman daily life must therefore turn elsewhere. The earliest additions to Rome's dominion were, understandably, cities and towns throughout Italy. These sites are a good source for understanding the domestic and familial culture of Rome, especially the well-preserved cities in Campania, such as Pompeii and Herculaneum. If used with care, various types of archaeological evidence therein may be used in conjunction with Roman literary sources to characterize life in Italian cities.

The city of Pompeii has been excavated almost continually since the mid-eighteenth century, making it one of the oldest archaeological projects currently open (Foss 2007: 28-9). This long history of excavation, research, and publication at Pompeii provides a great deal of information especially relating to the domestic realm, as hundreds of houses of varying sizes and types have been excavated at the site. Thus, Pompeii presents a vast resource to scholars for the examination of the structure of a Roman community and the individual households therein. There are, however, issues with certain aspects of earlier understandings of the site, which need to be reconsidered. Pompeii is often used to inform the much more limited remains of other sites, as well as to explicate Roman culture in general (Richardson 1988: xv). Buildings from Pompeii have been used to illustrate some of the ideal types described by the Augustan author Vitruvius in his *De Architectura*. Laurence (1994: 44-46), for instance, states that the organization of Pompeii's water supply is "strikingly similar to Vitruvius' description of

how it should be done¹².” Statements such as this create a view of Pompeii as a typical Roman city which can provide material correspondences for the literary evidence. This tendency is partially explained by Pompeii’s remarkable and unique level of preservation¹³, but there are theoretical reasons as well.

August Mau, the German archaeologist largely responsible for publicizing the site internationally in the late nineteenth century (Dobbins & Foss 2007: xxvii), believed that all Roman cities would share the same cultural ideals. Thus, he stated that “the representative rather than exceptional character of the remains at Pompeii” were “invaluable for the interpretation of the civilization of which they formed a part” (Mau 1899: 509-510). Essentializing Roman culture to the extent suggested by Mau is problematic, however. As Allison has pointed out, we do not yet know other sites well enough to determine whether or not Pompeii can be seen as typical. In her mind, this is especially true in the domestic sphere, which is more resistant to the “dominant culture” (Allison 1997: 141), as domestic spaces are influenced by “the attitudes and traditions through which we both conform to and confront the world beyond (Allison 2002: 1).” Thus, while both broad-reaching and local culture may be integrated into domestic contexts, there is also much individual choice and variation in these contexts. In addition to these considerations, Pompeii’s unique history and cultural influences are reflected in a set of adaptations to its environment and circumstances. Pompeii, just as all other sites,

¹² In the domestic sphere, Mau (1974: 250) points out the utility of Pompeian houses to illustrate some of the different types of *atria* categorized by Vitruvius, in addition to noting instances of correlation with and variation from the *de Architectura* throughout his discussion of the buildings of Pompeii.

¹³ The comparatively vast amount of evidence from Pompeii leads even modern scholars to claim that Pompeii is “the only ancient Roman society we can hope to know with any thoroughness (Franklin 2007: 524),” thus making the use of Pompeii as a proxy for the rest of Italy a seductive option.

should be considered on its own terms and can only then be used as a comparative for other areas and as an example of the variability of Roman culture.

Pompeii and Rome

The relationship between Pompeii and Rome developed over centuries before the city became integrated into the empire. It is important to briefly examine this process in order to understand the specific character of Pompeii and the way its community was organized. The site was settled and inhabited by various different peoples before it became a Roman colony in 80 B.C.E. Epigraphic evidence suggests that the earliest settlement in the sixth century can be characterized as Etruscan in character (Descœudres 2007: 14) and there is also much evidence of Greek culture in the area (Richardson 1988: 4). In its first few centuries, the settlement was much smaller than the later colony, and may have consisted of the area known today as the *Altstadt* (Geertman 2007: 82).

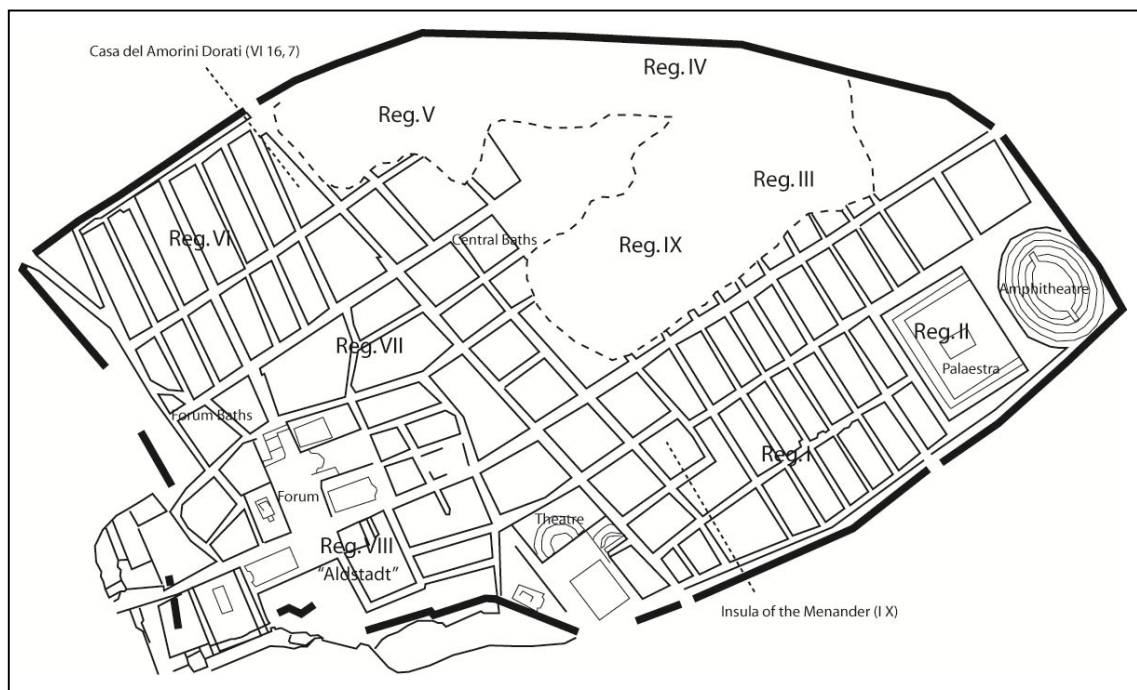


Figure 1: Pompeii city plan

The town as we know it today, with its regular plan and many Hellenistic amenities¹⁴, was a product of the Samnite period, especially in the late third century B.C.E. (Descoeudres 2007: 14-5).

During the Samnite Wars in the late fourth century, Pompeii and many other settlements in Campania became official allies (*socii*) of Rome (Mau 1899: 9). These arrangements were mainly military in character; Italian allies maintained their own governments and no taxes were imposed on them, but they were expected to contribute forces when necessary (Boatwright et al. 2004: 83-4). Production at Pompeii expanded vastly in the second century, attracting the attention of Rome, as well as Pompeii's nearer neighbors in Campania (Richardson 1988: 9). While much of the fertile land around Pompeii was probably devoted to the cultivation of self-sustaining agricultural products such as cereals (Jongman 2007: 503-4)¹⁵, the city was active in trade and exported certain products. According to Pliny the Elder, by the first century C.E. the land around Vesuvius was widely considered to be good for growing wine grapes (*H.N.* 14.34-35)¹⁶, and Pompeii specifically was praised for its *garum*, a popular fermented fish sauce (*H.N.* 31.93-94). Pompeian trade is attested archaeologically as well; "Pompeian Red Ware" pottery¹⁷ has been found as far afield as Britain and North Africa, while only 29% of the *terra sigillata* bowls discovered in Pompeii were of local Campanian origin (Laurence 1994: 53-54). Thus, it is clear that Pompeians both exported products in locally-made

¹⁴ These included a theatre, *palaestra*, and bath complex, in addition to large mansions and the open "civic center" that became a Roman-style forum.

¹⁵ Pompeii has often been characterized as a "consumer city," an urban core that was supported by the productive local area, with very little production in the city itself (e.g. Whittaker 1995, where the consumer city model of Max Weber is presented as an "illuminating" though flawed explanatory theory). Recently, this idea has been questioned, based on archaeological evidence for long-distance trade and production of certain items in the city. (Laurence 1994: 51)

¹⁶ In fact, one particular wine grape was named for Pompeii (*H.N.* 14.38).

¹⁷ The clay from the area near Pompeii has a distinctive red color, due to volcanic elements, by which it can be identified.

vessels and also imported certain items which they could have been acquired from closer sources. This shows the exercise of individual choice in consumption and a desire for variation, as well as a possible division by income between those capable of purchasing imported goods and those who relied on local production exclusively. Although most of the evidence from Pompeii can only attest to the Roman period, it is likely that such behaviors existed in some form earlier as well.

Pompeii's conversion to a Roman colony, called the *Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeianorum*, was a result of its participation in the rebellion of allies which led to the Social Wars at the start of the first century B.C.E. (Descœudres 2007: 16). There were many significant and visible changes to Pompeii in the following decades. A sizable population of Roman citizens¹⁸, Sulla's veterans and their families, settled in the city and the property of certain anti-Roman families was distributed among them (Descœudres 2007: 16). The government was arranged like that in other Roman colonies at this point, with a city council and elected officials (Mau 1899: 12). Certain colonists financed public works, such as the construction of an amphitheatre, the inscription of which attributes construction to the *quinquennial duumvirs*¹⁹ Gaius Quinctius Valgus and Marcus Porcius (*CIL* X 852). The Forum area underwent significant changes in this period; while the relatively new Temple of Jupiter became a Capitoleum (Descœudres 2007: 16), three buildings which may have been the *curia*, prison, and treasury, necessary for Roman-style government, were built here (Laurence 1994: 23-25). Inscriptions on such buildings

¹⁸ The exact number is unknown. Descœudres (2007) suggests that the group may have been as large as a legion, up to 5000, but considers that the number settled within the town itself was probably lower, as adding so large a new population would have caused a "more traumatic upheaval" than the evidence shows (p. 16 and note 90).

¹⁹ The *duumviri* were the two officials with judicial authority in the city, while *duumviri quinquennales* (i.e. those *duumviri* elected for one year every five years) also had censorial and financial powers (Mau 1899: 12-13). These particular men, Valgus and Porcius, were also responsible for the construction of a small theatre (Laurence 1994: 25).

from this point on are all in Latin²⁰ (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 17). The new colonists seem to have brought considerable wealth with them, as many large houses were built during the early colonial years (Richardson 1988: 13).

While earlier authors characterized Pompeii after its colonization as wholly Roman (c.f. Mau 1899: 8-14), more recent evidence suggests that many of the influential “indigenous” families maintained their positions and wealth and that the change “had only a very limited effect on Pompeii’s social and economic structure” (Descœudres 2007: 16)²¹. The question of the extent to which the Roman colonization changed Pompeian culture and society is difficult to answer. For one thing, evidence for buildings dating to pre-Roman Pompeii is rare and often poorly-understood. In addition, there are few comparable archaeological remains at Rome by which we can judge the Pompeian material. The lack of a well-rounded picture of life at all levels of Roman society makes it difficult to determine how similar the cultures of Rome and Pompeii were. It may be more beneficial to ask whether the answer to such a question is important. The Roman empire at its height was vast and even at its beginnings encompassed a wide variety of cultures and peoples. Even a settlement as nearby and closely-affiliated as Rome’s port at Ostia displays different features from the political and cultural center at Rome, but its “Romanness” is not questioned. Thus, the variations and adaptations of “Roman” ideas are what should characterize Roman culture in our minds. In this way, Pompeii may be viewed on an equal footing with any other settlement in the empire, and each site can be used to inform a holistic picture of the Roman world.

²⁰ While Latin is seen rarely in earlier inscriptions, Oscan was the dominant pre-Roman language (c.f. Cooley & Cooley 2004: 16).

²¹ Richardson (1988: 14-16) takes a middle ground, claiming that social change was “far-reaching” but noting that among the names of men known to have held offices in Pompeii, there was a “combination of the old and the new.”

The Last 17 Years at Pompeii

With the complexities inherent in understanding Pompeii's culture and people in mind, we can turn to the period leading up to Pompeii's abandonment and the impacts of this time on the remains of the city. The last few decades at Pompeii are more easily accessible in the archaeological record and are thus better understood than its early days. Our perception of this period, however, must be evaluated carefully. While the destruction of Pompeii in Vesuvius' eruption in 79 C.E. is the most widely-known event in the history of Pompeii, the city in fact experienced several years of catastrophe and upheaval. In addition, it has long been thought that Pompeii is a perfectly preserved and "hermetically sealed" site. This idea, known as the "Pompeii premise," carries with it the assumption that artifact assemblages such as household inventories were untouched by the formation processes common in the archaeological record, such as slow abandonment and reuse. This belief in turn causes us to picture the remains at Pompeii as a frozen moment in the lives of the city's residents. (Allison 2004a: 4) The situation is in fact more complex, as recent reevaluation has suggested, and Pompeii ought to be considered a town experiencing ongoing change, especially during this period.

The Roman authors Seneca and Tacitus both mentioned an earthquake at Pompeii in 62 C.E. (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 28-9); this event has been confirmed archaeologically. It is probable that other earthquakes and tremors occurred between 62 and 79 C.E.; the dates given by Roman authors, usually assumed to refer to a single earthquake, are not in agreement, while Pliny the Younger mentions that such tremors were a common occurrence in Campania. (Allison 2004a: 17-19) Multiple earthquakes may explain why the repairs to Pompeii prior to 79 C.E. seem to have been ongoing. In

any case, the damage was intense and wide-spread, rendering many houses inhabitable (Descœudres 2007: 18). Some Pompeians likely fled the area during this period and after (Allison 2004a: 20).

Due to seismic activity, there was much reconstruction in the city during its final decades. By the time of the volcano's eruption, the restoration of many public buildings was not yet complete (Descœudres 2007: 18). Evidence of this rebuilding and repair can be seen in private homes as well. The impact this period of destruction and reconstruction had upon the people of Pompeii is presented in a set of reliefs from the House of Caecilius Iucundus. Two panels from a *lararium* (family shrine) in the richly-decorated *atrium* of this building unmistakably represent parts of Pompeii after an earthquake; one in particular shows the Temple of Jupiter in the Forum tilted to one side (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 29-30). Cooley (2003: 21) has suggested that the reason for the panels' inclusion in the shrine may have been to display thankfulness at the survival of the household. Petersen (2006: 180-181) points out that the location of these reliefs in the part of the house in which Iucundus, a businessman, would have received clients, made them highly visible. She believes that they are incorporated into a grander "historicizing" scheme in the decoration of the house, which also involved the maintenance of Third-style paintings which had likely been commissioned by his father and the addition of new paintings in this older style. This would have been a unique way for Iucundus, who was probably the son of an ex-slave, to present his past ties to Pompeii and to his house in the absence of an elite ancestral line. Either way, the fact that the earthquakes were specifically chosen for representation and display shows that they were an important memory for Iucundus and other Pompeians.

The lasting effects of this seismic activity are evident in the condition of the buildings themselves as well. Even elite houses had bare plaster walls in some rooms, or temporary supports on walls, and certain parts of the city seem to have been completely abandoned (Richardson 1988: 19-20). Allison's in-depth study of the artifact assemblages of 30 atrium houses also provides evidence of disruption; building materials were found stored both in unfinished rooms and in areas such as courtyards (Allison 2004a: 187). Hoarding may explain collections of jewelry, coins, and other valuable objects found in about half of the houses (Allison 2004a: 182). This general disruption is important in the interpretation of the excavated remains, as it may have affected the use of the houses in various ways. Some houses seem to have been wholly uninhabited by the eruption of Vesuvius, for instance. Many buildings with on-going repairs display evidence for simultaneous occupation and use (Cooley 2003: 25)²²; it is possible that this was the norm²³. There are also frequent instances of "downgrading". In some cases, such as the Casa dell'Efebo, entertaining areas seem to have been abandoned before the eruption. Others, such as the Casa di Julius Polybius, dedicated more space to commercial or industrial interests in the years before 79 C.E. (Allison 2004a: 196) Keeping the varied responses to whatever seismic activity occurred before Vesuvius' eruption in mind, as well as the fact that repairs and alterations were ongoing in many cases, allows us to better explain unexpected finds and to understand the quality of life in these houses at the time of the city's destruction.

²² House II 9, 2, which was a gemcutter's workshop, was being repaired in 79 C.E., but ready gems, works in progress, and completely uncut gems were all found there, suggesting its continued use as well (Cooley 2003: 25).

²³ Allison (2004a: 196) summarizes her sample of atrium-style houses with the statement that "all the houses show some occupation after some disruption, but not all showed occupation at the time of the eruption," suiting her model of ongoing disruption in Pompeii.

Pompeian Households: Occupants and Occupations

Understanding these buildings as the inhabited spaces they were (c.f. George 1997a: 301), and also examining the interactions between and among households will allow us to reconstruct the community at Pompeii to a greater extent. It is therefore expedient to consider the people who inhabited Pompeii and would have used and visited the houses in question. The population of Pompeii is commonly estimated to have been between 10,000 and 15,000 people²⁴ (Descœudres 2007: 26). By the eruption of Vesuvius, which is the time best known archaeologically, the “indigenous” Oscans²⁵, the Greeks²⁶, and the Roman colonists (Mau 1899: 16) had likely formed a single and unique “Pompeian” culture. It is possible that an individual’s heritage was somewhat tied to their socio-economic status, but it is difficult to identify the cultural background of any particular Pompeian.

There was a wide range of trades performed at Pompeii, especially by freedmen and slaves. Agricultural products such as wine formed a large industry, as did trade within the city (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 157-8). There is also evidence of some long distance trade involving Pompeian goods. Although pottery was produced in the region, at Puteoli for instance, a large percentage of *terra sigillata* bowls were brought into the city from other parts of Italy, as well as Gaul and Africa (Laurence 1994: 53). A similar degree of local and distant trade is seen with lamps; in fact, a box of new, unused bowls and lamps from Gaul was found in house VIII 5, 9, likely destined for sale within

²⁴ Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 99), however, notes that estimations have ranged from around 6,000 to 20,000, based on various sources. He suggests a population of 10,000, assuming an average of 7-8 people per house.

²⁵ The influence of Pompeii’s Oscan past is evident in the fact that some graffiti written in the Oscan language are found dating to after the Roman colonization (Mau 1899: 16).

²⁶ These were probably freedmen for the most part, and are known from the Greek names that appear in the documents of L. Caecilius Iucundus (Mau 1899: 16).

Pompeii (Laurence 1994: 52). Trade from Pompeii to elsewhere can be traced through the distribution of Pompeian Red Ware and labeled *amphorae* in Greece, North Africa, and farther in the outskirts of the Roman sphere of influence (Laurence 1994: 54).

Various occupations can be attested in Pompeii from electoral graffiti, some of which included the trade of those endorsing a candidate, as well the presence of specialized equipment in certain buildings (Laurence 1994: 55). There were many bakeries in Pompeii (Mau 1899: 388), which can be identified by grinding mills and large ovens. Often, bakeries without mills were equipped to sell bread as well; some of these were found in converted atrium houses. (Laurence 1994: 55-56) Wool processing and cloth production were important businesses in the city as well (Mau 1899: 398); the evidence for this includes many graffiti, as well as equipment such as vats and furnaces, which would not have been necessary for household production (Laurence 1994: 61). Many buildings had shops attached and busy streets were lined with small shops or taverns, which were probably also occupied (Pirson 2007: 457).

Slaves were common in Pompeian households, where they performed diverse tasks. Even non-elite Pompeians may have owned one or more slaves, while the upper classes would have had many, as an obvious symbol of status (George 1997b: 20). They were likely involved in kitchen work, domestic production such as weaving, caring for children, and running errands (George 2007: 538-9). Slaves were also engaged in many commercial ventures, such as the many shops in the city, and in some cases they served as business managers and as representatives of their masters²⁷ (George 2007: 541). Slaves and their masters often lived and worked in close proximity. Although there may have

²⁷ Some of the documents of the “banker” L. Caecilius Iucundus were witnessed by a slave in his place (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 181).

been separate areas inhabited by slaves in large houses²⁸, smaller ones would have necessitated more proximity, and perhaps closer relationships. (George 1997a: 316-317) Regardless of the emotional ties that existed in many cases, slaves were often seen as commodities as well; they could be used as security for loans, for instance (Lintott 2002: 558-559).

Elite men often pursued full-time political careers. Eligibility to run for magistracies was determined by property ownership, though the exact requirement is unknown. (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 111-112). Magistrates drew their support from the lower classes, often but not always organized into *collegia*. These elites would also have been involved in patronage and investment in real estate. (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 121) Freedmen could also engage in the type of business in which aristocrats preferred not to be involved. L. Caecilius Iucundus may have been one such man²⁹. His activities as a “banker” and go-between in auctions are known from the large number of wax tablets preserved in house V 1, 26. He also seems to have rented properties for profit, such as a fullery and farmland. (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 181-2). Money-making ventures such as these allowed freedmen to gain influence and eventually higher positions in society, including the ability to hold government offices (Franklin 2007: 523).

Of course, the working men and politicians were not the sole members of their households; they were supported by the other members of their kin group and residents of their home. Suggestions as to the composition of families and households at Pompeii rest mainly on evidence from literature and funerary monuments. While it is difficult to say

²⁸ *Lararia* located in kitchens, especially when other shrines were positioned in more public areas, may be evidence of this sort of separation.

²⁹ While the reconstruction of the Caecilii family from documents and funerary monuments is not quite complete, it appears that Iucundus was the son of Felix, a *libertus* (Petersen 2006: 166).

with certainty, it is assumed that something akin to a nuclear family was the basic type (Dixon 1992: 6-7), though there would of course have been exceptions and possibly regional variations. Households, however, were composed of more than blood kin, and would have often contained more distant relatives, slaves³⁰, apprentices, and others (Dixon 1992: 11). Having noted great variation in the size of households in Pompeii³¹, Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 116-117) suggests that we think of the buildings as containing “housefuls,” rather than families; this allows us to include non-related individuals such as lodgers³² and assorted dependents as well.

In addition to biological kin, adopted family, and slaves, freedmen and women often remained close to their masters’ households. Upon attaining their freedom, ex-slaves would become clients of their former master and sometimes continued to live in the house (Cooley & Cooley 2004: 146-7). These resident *liberti* performed domestic tasks similar to those done by household slaves (George 1997a: 299). The relationships between freedmen and freedwomen and their former masters could get quite complicated, as the tablets from Herculaneum relating to the case of Petronia Iusta show. This case was the result of Iusta’s attempts to prove that she was not a freedwoman of her foster-parents, but had been born free after they had manumitted her mother. No matter her status, Petronius Stephanos and his wife Calatoria Themis raised her, and claimed to have treated her as a daughter, perhaps as they did not have children of their own. Her birth mother had attempted to remove Iusta from this household by paying an *alimenta*³³,

³⁰ The Latin term *familia* often denoted the “servile” members of the household (George 1997a: 299). This is in fact one of the several definitions for the word.

³¹ He bases this on both house size and number of rooms.

³² Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 106-108) makes a strong case for looking beyond “owner-occupiers” and considering renting to lodgers and shops. His evidence for this includes graffiti advertising space to let, as well as buildings with multiple entrances and external stairways.

³³ The money paid for the fostering of a freeborn child.

claiming that she could now support her daughter as she evidently had been unable to do previously, but Iusta was returned to the family who raised her. (Lintott 2002: 560-564)

From the above examples, it is clear that the Roman family, and the determination of just who composed one, was a complicated question even in antiquity. While it is evident from sources such as funerary inscriptions and letters that Roman families were bound together by both emotional ties and obligations, they also formed the basic unit of economic production (Dixon 1992: 28-9). Households often engaged in part-time production, a contrast with workshops which operated all year and were more specialized (Laurence 1994: 55). Much, but not all, of this domestic production was likely for household use. As Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 138) points out, however, the line between domestic and industrial is often blurred: “at what point does the *materfamilias* spinning and weaving with her maids cross from the domestic to the industrial?” According to Allison’s survey of atrium houses, cloth production was one of the most evident industries in domestic contexts³⁴. Spinning, weaving, dying, and sewing occurred mostly in well-lit areas such as *atria* and gardens. (Allison 2004a: 146-148). She also noted that tools, especially those for agricultural activities, were found spread throughout houses, probably where they were stored. Other evidence she believes points to productive activities includes bulk storage in jars and *amphorae*, which was most common in *atria* and gardens. (Allison 2004a: 148-152)

Larger-scale or more specialized production was also common in domestic contexts. Over half of the sample houses examined by Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 137-138) had shops, workshops, or trade areas incorporated into them. He believes that this is

³⁴ She notes, but does not address, the question of whether this would have been production for household use or trade; in any specific case it could have been either.

logical, considering the relative lack of specialized industrial areas in the city (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 118). Economic activities were present in many houses, even large elite ones, and in some cases the fact that this was industrial rather than domestic is fairly explicit. About a third of the larger houses in Wallace-Hadrill's sample had no *atria* and these same houses often included large areas devoted to economic production³⁵. Some of the largest houses in the group mixed economic and receptive functions. The Casa degli Amorini Dorati (VI 16, 7), for instance, had several shops and workshops attached (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 139); one "*caupona*"³⁶ at entrances 1 and 2 was separate, but is considered to have been linked to the house, while the "*caupona*" at entrance 6 opened into the main house's peristyle (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 215).

Houses in Pompeii: Architecture and Activity

A look at the organization of space and activity in Pompeian houses will help us to understand the daily lives of their residents. Much research on Pompeian domestic space concerns the elite "*atrium*" and "*atrium-peristyle*" houses and analyzes the remains in the context of Roman literary sources. The Augustan author Vitruvius, in his opus *De Architectura*, describes the elite house in great detail. This work has often been used in conjunction with actual house plans from Pompeii, to explicate Roman use of domestic space³⁷; the terms used in Vitruvius' text are adopted to label rooms in excavated houses which appear to match his descriptions. Mau (1899: 247-248), for instance, included an

³⁵ Several of these houses had large horticultural plots, while others incorporated workshops of various sorts. Wallace-Hadrill sees a tie between lack of emphasis on reception (i.e. no atrium) and focus on industry.

³⁶ The identification of these areas as *cauponae* or inns specifically is not supported, but their spatial segregation and separate entrances do suggest that they may have been shops or industrial areas of some sort.

³⁷ C.f. Mau (1899: 245): "Our chief sources of information regarding the domestic architecture of ancient Italy are two, - the treatise of Vitruvius, and the remains found at Pompeii. The Pompeian houses present many variations from the plan described by the Roman architect; yet in essential particulars there is no disagreement, and it is not difficult to form a clear conception of their arrangements."

“ideal plan” of a Pompeian house (see Figure 2), in which “the names are given to the parts of the house, the relative location of which is subject to comparatively little variation.” Once rooms have been assigned a name based on their position and shape, their use is often inferred (c.f. Allison 2004a: 63). For instance, a room that is richly-painted and has space for the three couches used in formal dining may be designated a *triclinium*, and thereafter is assumed to have been used as a dining room.

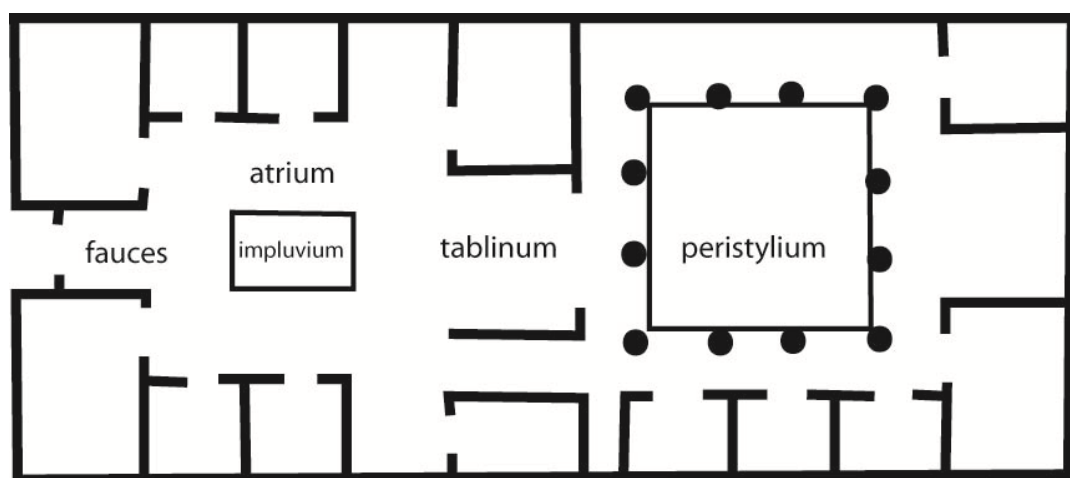


Figure 2: An ideal house plan inspired by Vitruvius (adapted from Mau 1899: 247)

There are several problems with this method. First, Vitruvius’ audience was composed of elite male Romans, and Book VI, which deals with domestic architecture, largely relates to elite domestic spaces and the concerns of an aristocratic *patron*³⁸. In addition, his work is largely instructive and thus focuses on issues such as the ideal proportions for each room. He only rarely mentions the use of rooms. This is in fact

³⁸ He notes, for instance, that “magnificent vestibules (*vestibula*) and alcoves (*tabulina*) and halls (*atria*) are not necessary to persons of a common fortune, because they pay their respects by visiting others, and are not visited by others (*De Arch.* 6.5.1),” while these are the very sorts of rooms to which he has devoted the previous chapters.

restricted mainly to categorizing them by who was allowed access³⁹, thus it is extremely difficult to determine what was done in a particular room from Vitruvius alone.

Beyond the *De Architectura*, textual sources are largely limited to anecdotal references in the letters of elite men such as Cicero and Pliny the Younger. Most of Pliny's discussion of domestic space constitutes a detailed description of his villa; in one letter (Plin. Y. *Ep.* II, xvii) he describes the layout of the building with emphasis on the views of various rooms. The areas he focuses on are those such as dining rooms, baths, and his gallery (*cryptoporticus*) – all of which would have been useful in elite entertaining. Pliny's explication of his villa would have less relevance for houses in town, and probably no bearing on lower class housing. The brief glimpses of domestic life drawn from literature are also sometimes contradictory and may complicate our understanding of space. Pliny (*Ep.* II, xvii) notes that in his Laurentine villa, for instance, there was a room he could use alternately as a “large parlour (*cubiculum grande*)⁴⁰” and a “moderate dining-room (*modica cenatio*);” by the system of applying function from analogy, however, the nuanced use of this room would be neglected. This is important to realize, as it is possible that many spaces, if not all space, were similarly flexible.

Literary sources, then, taken by themselves, do not provide us with a complete and accurate picture of domestic life. In order to test the conclusions drawn from textual analogy, archaeological data is of paramount importance. A careful consideration of the finds from a particular room, or type of room, in conjunction with the decoration and location of the space, may allow us to question or uphold the previous associations of

³⁹ “Private” rooms (those into which uninvited guests may not enter, called *propria*) included bedrooms (*cubicula*), dining-rooms (*triclinia*), and baths (*balnaea*), while “public” (*communis*) areas included vestibules (*vestibula*), courtyards (*cava aedium*), and peristyles (*peristylia*) (Vitr. *De Arch.* 6.5.1).

⁴⁰ Translated in the Loeb edition as “parlour,” the *cubiculum* is a particularly confusing space, for which see below.

Latin terminology, as well as providing further and more accurate information on the type and distribution of household activities (c.f. Allison 1997: 117 ff.). It is important to reconsider other assumptions about Roman domestic space as well, such as the existence of a clear distinction between “public” and “private” space along lines we would recognize today.

With these considerations in mind, it is possible to turn a critical eye to the uses of several common room types seen in Pompeian elite dwellings. These houses are defined archaeologically by the presence of a large open front hall which often had a central pool, which was called an *impluvium* by Vitruvius and also by Varro (*Ling.* 5.161) in his discussion of housing terms in *De Lingua Latina*⁴¹. These are in fact the first rooms discussed in the *De Architectura*; Vitruvius describes five different types and gives the ideal dimensions for them. Though he alternates between the terms “*cavum aedium*” and “*atrium*,”⁴² the latter is the term used by scholars today. While these rooms are commonly associated with reception and display and are considered along with the connected *tablinum* as the setting for the institution of *salutatio* (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 12), they are in fact much more complex spaces.

In her artifactual study of Pompeian atrium houses, Allison (2004a: 65-67) defines 22 distinct spaces based on their form and location within the house. Her definition of a “front hall,” spatially equivalent to the literary *atrium*, is a large room, open to the main entranceway of the house and leading to rooms on its four sides. These commonly had a small pool (*impluvium*) and associated roof opening (*compluvium*).

⁴¹ This work, which was written between 47 and 45 B.C.E., dealt mostly with the etymology of Latin, though non-extant books also seem to have discussed syntax. Books V through X, which are the only complete sections remaining today, treat word origins of several thematic categories (Kent 1938: ix-xi).

⁴² Varro uses both as well, claiming that the use of the term *atrium* was taken from the Etruscans after Romans began to use Etruscan-style courts.

Some of the houses, but by no means a majority, had items such as statuary and decorative tables in these rooms, while only seven had *lararia* or household shrines in the *atrium* (Allison 2004a: 68-69). Based on the finds within the front halls of her 30 cases, she concludes that these spaces were used for display and ritual, but also for many other household activities and domestic storage⁴³ (Allison 2004a: 121).

The comparatively small rooms that were entered from these halls or from peristyles⁴⁴ are often labeled *cubicula* and have been associated with the modern idea of a bedroom. In his discussion of the decoration of the House of Lucretius Fronto, for instance, Clarke calls a small room entered from the *atrium* “*cubiculum* g,” presumably due to its size and location (Clarke 1991:153, see plan on p. 147). He then continues to suggest that this is “a woman’s room” because of painted scenes such as Venus dressing her hair (Clarke 1991: 157). Nearby “*cubiculum* i” is described as having been decorated with “moral lessons for the child or children who slept there (Clarke 1991: 159).”

Wallace-Hadrill (1996: 110-111) realizes that these rooms “do not overlap fully with the modern concept of a bedroom,” in that they were fairly visible and accessible, but does not question the idea that they were intended for sleeping. Few of the rooms assigned the term “*cubiculum*,” however, display strong evidence of beds or bedding. Rather, decorated ones contained many personal items, supplies for needlework, and some storage of ceramics (Allison 2004a: 71-72), while undecorated ones stored more utilitarian items (Allison 2004a: 74-76). Even in the literary sources, it is evident that a variety of activities were often located in these rooms, including rest, reception of certain

⁴³ Evidence for this includes items such as loom-weights in eight houses and amphorae in nine (Allison 2004: 69).

⁴⁴ Allison’s types 4 (“small closed room off side of front hall”) and 12 (“small closed room off garden/terrace or lower floor”) in addition to some other rooms in neither the front hall nor the garden area are all commonly called *cubicula* (Allison 2004a: 64).

guests, and display of art (Riggsby 1997). This supports Allison's artifactually-based conclusion (2004a: 73) that the "*cubiculum*" was a "boudoir rather than...a sleeping space."

The *triclinium*, or formal dining area, is another space which has garnered much attention. According to Vitruvius (*De Arch.* 6.5.1), *triclinia*, which were specifically dining rooms with three couches arranged for entertaining, were considered private (*proprius*)⁴⁵, in the sense that uninvited guests could not enter them. Clarke's discussion of *triclinia* focuses on the views of guests with respect to frescoes and gardens (Clarke 1991: 17). Other dining areas existed, and the Romans had several different terms for dining rooms as well, which may have referred to different forms of rooms. Mau (1899: 265) notes that large elegant rooms assigned the Greek term *oecus* by Vitruvius may have been used for dining "especially on notable occasions." Varro (*Ling.* 5.33) claimed that the term *cenaculum* had originally referred to dining rooms in general ("*ubi cenabant cenaculum vocabant*"), but was later used for any room above the first floor. Allison (2004a: 84) points out that large houses often placed formal al fresco dining in their colonnaded gardens. Some houses in her sample had several dining areas, though it is unclear which would have been called by what name, and in fact whether each term referred to a different kind of room. Multiple areas for dining are attested in literature as well; Trimalchio, for instance, in Petronius' *Satyrical* (77), boasts four such rooms (*cenationes*) and a "high" dining room (*susum cenationem*)⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ The word used by Vitruvius denotes personal possession and use, but does not really correspond to modern notions of privacy.

⁴⁶ This work is satirical, of course, and thus should be used carefully, but Trimalchio's assertion is not outside the realm of possibility when Vitruvius' comments on seasonal dining rooms are taken into account, along with archaeological evidence for various dining areas.

Allison (2004a: 78-80) identifies several different types of room which are commonly labeled *triclinia* in excavation reports. One category, her Type 6, is composed of medium to large rooms positioned at the corners of front halls, many of which were open to the large gardens in the back portion of the house. Many houses in her sample had more than one of these rooms. Allison finds little conclusive evidence, such as the remains of or niches for dining couches, for the use of these rooms for dining. The presence of general storage, indicated by cupboards, shelves, and storage vessels instead leads her to suggest that if they were in fact dining rooms, they may have changed their function with the season, and were used for storage in the summer (i.e. at the time of the eruption). This interpretation can be supported by reference to Vitruvius (*De Arch.* 6.4.1-2), who mentions that dining rooms should face whatever direction allows them sunlight in the season of their use. Room Types 10 and 11, medium to large rooms off the gardens, either closed or open respectively, are also called *triclinia* by archaeologists. The finds in these rooms, such as dining equipment in both, and evidence for couches or tables in Type 11, make them much more likely dining areas, though both also had some evidence for other activities such as storage. (Allison 2004a: 90-94)

The garden section of the *atrium-peristyle* house was another important feature; in fact, all but one of Allison's case studies had gardens, either behind the hall area, or less frequently to the side of it (Allison 2004a: 84). According to Clarke (1991: 19-25), these planted spaces, in addition to painted landscapes on the walls of interior rooms, allowed town houses to imitate more expensive and desirable villas. He also emphasizes the use of the *peristyle* for guest reception and entertaining. Dwyer (1982: 116-119), on the other

hand, discusses gardens as a prime location for the display of statues and water features. As mentioned previously, gardens were used as formal dining areas in certain houses.

While there is archaeological evidence for each of these status-related garden functions⁴⁷, small finds indicate that these spaces were in fact even more varied in use. Many of the gardens themselves held storage containers such as *amphorae*, and some also stored building materials and “scattered domestic material” such as lighting implements and personal items. (Allison 2004a: 86-87) The ambulatories around the gardens presented much evidence for domestic storage in chests and cupboards and more utilitarian storage in *amphorae*, as well as items related to food preparation and furniture such as tables.

Jashemski (1979: 26-32) analyzed archaeological evidence, such as root cavities, to determine which plants were grown in Pompeian gardens. She found many of them had been planted with fruit or nut trees, and one house - The House of Polybius - also provided evidence of a ladder which could have been used in fruit picking. In fact, several houses without *atria*⁴⁸ appear to have had significant horticultural plots (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 138). From her survey of the types of plants grown in the gardens she was able to excavate, Jashemski (1979: 32) suggests that formal gardens, such as shrubbery laid out in decorative patterns, did exist in Pompeian peristyles, but that informal productive gardens were common as well, and in some cases the two were mixed. Thus, we should assume neither that gardens were used mostly for entertainment, nor that all

⁴⁷ Common finds reported by Allison (2004a: 85) from the gardens in her case study include pools, fountains, masonry and wood dining areas, sculpture, statue bases, and niches for either ritual or display purposes.

⁴⁸ Wallace-Hadrill associates these plots with commercial food production, rather than domestic, but this is difficult to say for certain. In his Pompeian sample, large houses without *atria* commonly devoted large amounts of space to “profit-making activity,” including fulling and baking, in addition to the horticultural possibility.

gardens within peristyles were formal. While some may have been used exclusively for display, most were flexible spaces, which could be used to provide the household with food or as workspaces.

The above examples illustrate one of the dangers of relying on texts in a discussion of domestic space – the idea that any given room had a single function. Some spaces, including the various dining rooms, had changeable uses, perhaps dependent on the season. Many, such as *atria* and so-called *cubicula* appear to have housed various activities simultaneously. Areas such as *atria* and gardens, which appear from literary sources to have been focused on reception or entertainment, were also used for more mundane and sometimes productive means. With this reassessment in mind, it is now possible to turn to specific houses, in order to glimpse the activities performed in a particular elite home, as well as to compare the use of space in a smaller house. Looking at certain rooms as parts of a whole house, rather than grouping rooms from several houses by type, will allow us to more easily populate the houses with residents and their activities.

Case Studies

The Insula of the Menander (Insula I, 10), is one of the most carefully excavated and extensively documented sections of Pompeii (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 193). Most importantly for a study such as this, the unpublished records for this site provide a great deal of context for the artifacts found in these buildings (Allison 2006: 4). It has also been the subject of a recent and thorough analysis in several volumes (c.f. Ling 1997 and Allison 2006). The vast amount of data makes this area an ideal one from which to draw case studies. The block (see Figure 1) is located between the *Altstadt* area and the more

regular, and presumably more recent, eastern section of Pompeii (Ling 1997: 8). It is named for its largest⁴⁹ and most distinctive building, the sprawling Casa del Menandro, but there were ten other housing units in the insula (Figure 3)⁵⁰ ranging from a ten square meter one-room *taberna* to several elite homes in Wallace-Hadrill's third and fourth quartiles⁵¹ (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 193-4).

The buildings selected as case studies in this thesis, mainly on the basis of available artifactual data, include the Casa del Fabbro (I 10, 7; doorway 7 on the insula), an average-sized elite atrium-style house and also House I 10, 1 (doorway 1), a much smaller building assumed to have been a combination workshop and dwelling (c.f. Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 193). I will explore each house's history and character in general before focusing on the artifactual evidence from the types of spaces discussed above – the *atrium*, *cubicula*, dining rooms, and gardens of the Casa del Fabbro and the spaces which could be seen as similar in the smaller building. The fact that both cases are drawn from the same block should limit potential regional or preservational variation between the two, though different recording standards may have affected the amount of material available for study.

⁴⁹ At an impressive 1700 square meters on the ground floor (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 193), and having not one but two *atria* in addition to its large peristyle garden (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 82), this is one of the largest houses in Wallace-Hadrill's sample.

⁵⁰ This highly intermingled use of space is typical of Pompeii in general (c.f. Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 134 ff. and Laurence 1994: 67 ff.).

⁵¹ The third quartile ranges from 175 to 345 square meters of ground-floor area, while the fourth encompasses all buildings from 350 to 3000 square meters. According to Wallace-Hadrill, these are the "average" and the "richest and most famous" houses, respectively (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 81-82).

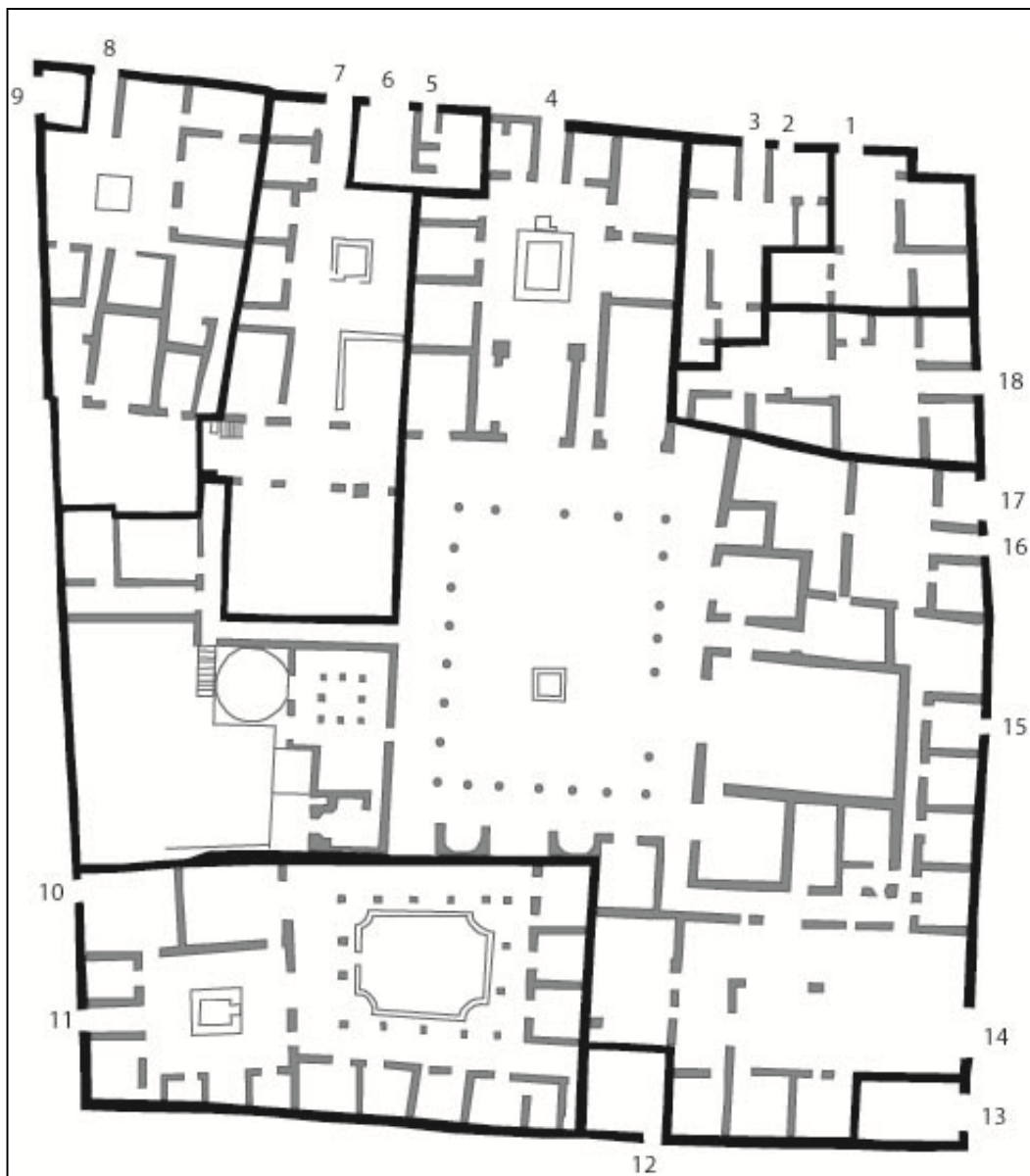


Figure 3: The Insula of the Menander

The Casa del Fabbro (I 10, 7)

This “modest”⁵² atrium house has a fairly standard atrium-peristyle layout (Allison 2004b), though due to the “cramped” nature of the property, it includes small rooms⁵³ on only one side of the *atrium* (Ling 1997: 150). The irregularities in the house’s

⁵² C.f. Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 89). Presumably he means that the dwelling is modest compared to other, larger atrium houses.

⁵³ These are *cubicula*, according to Ling (1997: 150).

plan may be explained with reference to the history of the insula in general; Ling notes that the space to the east of the *fauces* (entrance) had been “detached” to form a new property, for instance, and suggests that the house had been originally connected to the Casa del Menandro. He further believes, on the basis of decorative schemes⁵⁴, that the house had been downgraded, due to either a harsher economic climate for the owners or to new ownership with “different cultural standards.” (Ling 1997: 150)

The idea that the Casa del Fabbro underwent some kind of downgrade before the eruption is common. Allison (2004b), for instance, suggests that the owner may have become impoverished or a new owner may have had no need to entertain, leading to the use of entertainment space for industrial activity. At any rate, the fact that two skeletons were found on and near a bed in Room 9 (Allison 2006: 179-180), in addition to “cooking activity” in Area 11 (Allison 2004b), and the very large amount of artifacts found in general show that the building was occupied in some capacity when Vesuvius erupted. Thus, while some evidence for activities in this house may run counter to our expectations, any conclusions we draw likely apply to the house as it was actually used, rather than the artifact assemblages having been disturbed and possibly added to over time.

⁵⁴ Third-style paintings exist in two rooms, while areas such as the *fauces* and *atrium* do not appear to have been decorated at all, and the paintings of the *tablinum* “had been allowed to fall into ruin.” Parts of the house had been redecorated with Fourth-style paintings, which Ling sees as “simple and unambitious” (Ling 1997: 150).

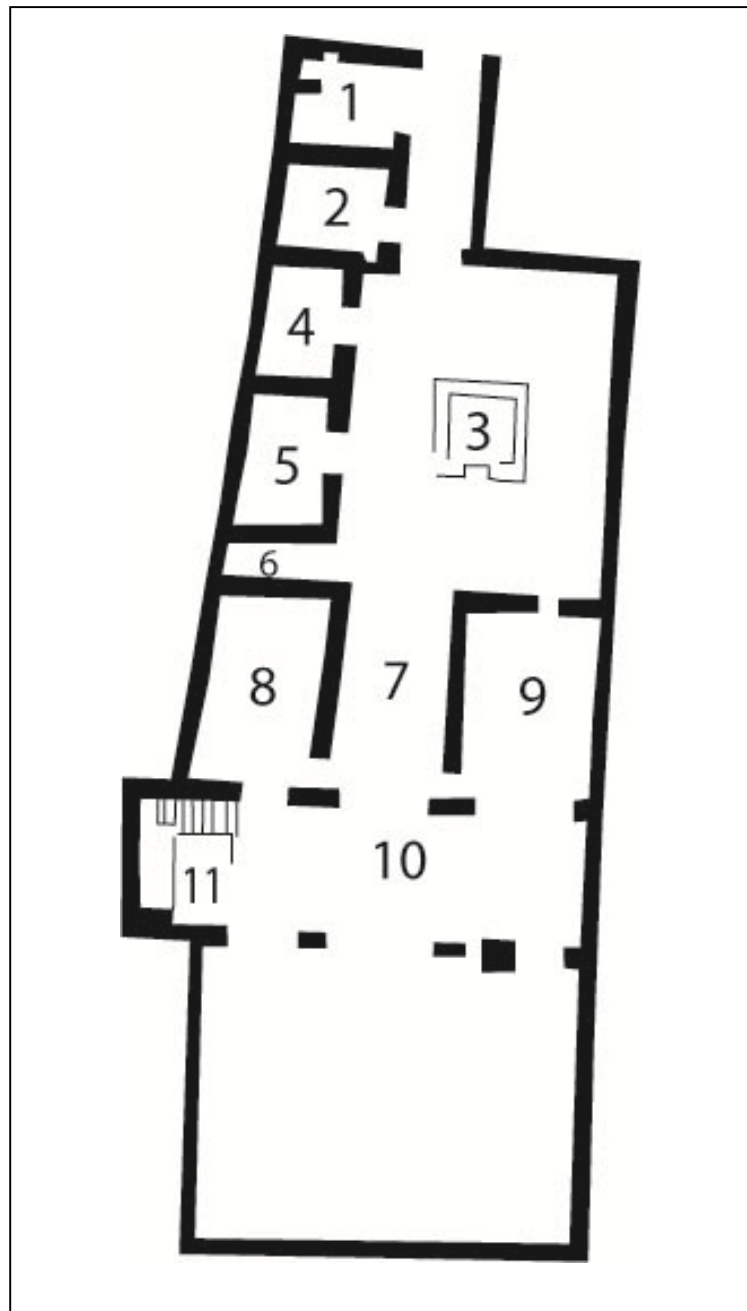


Figure 4: The Casa del Fabbro

Several suggestions as to the trade of the last resident of this house have been made based on artifactual evidence. The various tools found in the building suggest its use in some industry, despite the fact that there is no apparent workshop area and that many of the objects cannot be tied to any specific use (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 136). Elia

(1934: 292) suggested that the last occupant made cabinets and furniture (“*una fabor arcarius, un costruttore di casse e di mobile*”), because of the varied and “artistic” nature of the finds, which included many chisels, a saw, a gouge, a file, and several hammers (Allison, 2004b). Gralfs, on the other hand, noted the large amount of bronze objects, such as jugs and pots, in the house, which led her to believe that the building had in fact been converted into a metalworking shop for which these objects served as raw materials (qtd. in Allison 2004b). Ling (1997: 161 ff.), having pointed out that certain objects were misidentified by Elia and were in fact surgical tools, suggests that the resident could also have been a doctor. Allison (2004b) does not believe that any specialized occupation can account for the variety of tools from the Casa del Fabbro, but having noted the disorganized storage of these hundreds of items suggests that the finds may have been the result of collecting and salvaging⁵⁵.

Table 1
Artifacts by room and category; Casa del Fabbro.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	UF
ABLUTIONS/HYGIENE	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X		X
AGRICULTURAL TOOLS	X	X						X		X			
CLOTH-WORKING		X	X		X	X	X			X			X
CONSTRUCTION			X					X	X	X			
DISPLAY			X							X			
DOMESTIC TOOLS			X				X		X	X			
FOOD CONSUMPTION	X				X		X		X	X	X	X	
FOOD PREPARATION										X	X	X	X
LIGHTING		X	X			X		X					X
MISC. POTTERY	X	X			X	X		X			X		
RITUAL									X	X	X		X
STORAGE	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
WATER COLLECTION/DISPERSAL			X							X		X	

Note: UF stands for “upper floors.”

⁵⁵ Or further, that the Casa del Fabbro had been converted into a “bric-a-brac shop.”

The *atrium* of the Casa del Fabbro is architecturally easy to identify; Room 3 was a front hall with characteristic *impluvium* and providing access to smaller rooms to one side and to the peristyle area behind it (c.f. Allison 2006: 338-340). Room 7 which connects the atrium to the ambulatory has been interpreted as a *tablinum*, completing the traditional axis of reception (c.f. Ling 1997: 152)⁵⁶. There was quite a bit of storage furniture in this room, including four wooden cupboards and several wooden chests containing a large amount of artifacts. There were, for instance, many decorative glass vessels, coins and jewelry stored here. There were also surgical tools, possible metal-working implements, and measuring devices such as weights and a ruler. (Allison 2006: 161-170) The great variety among these finds led Allison (2006: 339) to comment that the activities alluded to by this assemblage “could have taken place within a normal domestic context,” but that the mixed assemblage “may equally have belonged to specialized activities.” In general, this *atrium* contained much storage, though this storage was less domestic than it was in most Pompeian houses, but the personal and luxury items such as gold earrings, ring, and necklace found here as well do not support the idea of an specialized workshop. In any case, the hall of the Casa del Fabbro illustrates that *atria* were adaptable and could be used for a great number of different functions, many of which were not necessarily related to elite reception.

Rooms 2, 4, and 5, all of which are located to one side of Atrium 3⁵⁷, were labelled by Elia (1934: 297) as *cubicula*. Rooms 4 and 5 display more convincing

⁵⁶ Though Allison points out a general lack of artifacts from this area (2004b) and the fact that the decoration was in disrepair to suggest that the room was no longer used for whatever formal purpose it may once have had (2006: 341), but was instead mainly a passageway (2004b).

⁵⁷ Thus, they all fall into Allison’s architectural category 4 (Allison 2004a: 71-74).

evidence of bed niches or alcoves⁵⁸, while Room 2 does not⁵⁹. Room 2 was, however, painted in Fourth style, which strengthens its potential identification as a *cubiculum* (Ling 1997: 152), as do many of the finds from the room, including a bronze mirror fragment, glass bottles, bone spindles, and a clay lamp (Allison 2006: 160-161). The walls of Room 5 were painted in the Fourth style, and the artifacts within had a similar character to those of Room 2; glass bottles, bronze vessels, and various sewing needles were found here (Allison 2006: 171). Room 4 had no recorded finds (Allison 2006: 170), but was also decorated in the Fourth style (Allison 2006: 340). While evidence of actual beds was not found in any of these rooms, the personal artifacts contained in the rooms are consistent with Allison's assertion that closed decorated rooms attached to front halls were used mostly for private domestic activities, which may or may not have included sleeping (Allison 2004a: 71-72). Room 8 may have been a *cubiculum* in this way as well⁶⁰, though Elia believed that it had been converted to a *triclinium* at some point. Aside from couch fittings, which could support either view, there is little evidence for any particular use in this room, however, and finds such as iron tools such as wedges and a shovel suggest that it was no longer used for whatever purpose it was originally intended (Allison 2006: 174-178).

It is a bit clearer that Room 9, in which the two skeletons were found, was a dining area. There was room for the three couches necessary in a *triclinium* (Allison 2006: 342-343) and Ling (1997: 154) notes that the pattern of the decorative floor tiles

⁵⁸ This is not incontrovertible proof that the rooms were used as bedrooms, however. There are several categories of such recesses, divided by Allison on the basis of size and height on the wall. Some may have been cupboards, for instance, and very few contained any evidence for actual beds or couches. (Allison 2004a: 43-48)

⁵⁹ In fact, Elia also suggested that this may have been a *cella ostiaria*, or doorkeeper's room.

⁶⁰ A *cubicolo diurno*, according to Elia (1934: 282) "*adattata posteriormente a triclinio con due ingressi.*"

“presupposes an arrangement of three couches round the rear part of the room,” as the pattern changes where each of these would have been (Carratelli 1990: 408-409). The remains of a couch or bed were found in this room; one of the skeletons was positioned on top of it, while the other was crouched nearby. More obvious evidence for dining is provided by the various bronze vessels with forms associated with ablutions before dining, as well as bronze tableware; these included several *oinochoai* for pouring at the table, a *patera*, an *olpe*, and an *oleare*. Most of the other objects found in the room, such as large numbers of bronze and silver coins as well as finger rings, were associated with the skeletons (Allison 2006: 178-180), which Allison (2006: 343) believes belonged to residents of the house who were attempting to take refuge and protect their valuables. Ling (1997: 162) also assumes that these skeletons belong to residents when he asserts that the money found with them indicates that “whatever the family’s source of income, they had a certain amount of cash at hand.” There is no conclusive evidence as to whether these individuals were the occupants of the house or whether they were outsiders, possibly taking advantage of the chaos surrounding the eruption to access the household’s stored wealth.

Garden 12, which was connected to the *atrium* section of the house by Portico 10⁶¹, formed about a quarter of the ground-floor area of the Casa del Fabbro (Ling 1997: 154). The most obvious feature of the garden was a central wooden pergola (Allison 2006: 192), which may have covered an “open-air *triclinium* (Ling 1997: 154).” Most of

⁶¹ Consistent with Allison’s findings (2004a: 87-90) that the ambulatories of colonnaded gardens were frequently equipped for storage, this portico contained a variety of domestic and utilitarian objects, mostly stored in cupboards (Allison 2006: 343-344).

the finds from the garden, however, were more utilitarian in nature⁶², leading Allison (2004b) to posit that it may not have been functioning in its formal entertaining capacity by the eruption.

As it seems clear that the Casa del Fabbro was occupied in 79 C.E., the artifactual evidence more or less represents the daily activities of the house's residents. Some specific finds which seem to be out of place, such as the collected coins in Room 9, may be explained by the reactions of the occupants during Vesuvius' eruption. While certain areas, such as the several "*cubicula*," seem to have been used for their original purposes at this time, though perhaps with more varied storage, other areas appear to have been adapted and "downgraded." The garden, for instance, does not appear to have been in use for dining and entertaining, although Room 8 does appear to have been used as a dining room. Spaces such as Atrium 3 had probably always been used for a variety of activities, but may have been begun to house even more utilitarian or industrial tasks at some point between the decoration of the Fourth-style rooms and the eruption of Vesuvius. Of course, not all of the vast array of implements need have been used by the residents; it is possible that some of this material was collected and stored for some purpose.

Overall, the Casa del Fabbro demonstrates the adaptability of space that was present even in somewhat large atrium-type houses. Pompeians were able to change their living circumstances when necessary and to choose from a variety of approaches to dealing with economic troubles. Rooms and areas which were built and originally used for entertaining and reception could be adapted for more productive or domestic purposes. This could have been done by either members of the original household whose

⁶² These were scarce, but included tools for grinding and ceramic storage containers (Allison 2006: 192-194).

circumstances had changed, or by new occupants who did not require the space for guests but needed work and storage spaces instead.

House I 10, 1

This much smaller building also had an “irregular” plan due to changes in the surrounding area - in this case, the addition of a fountain on the street corner and a projecting “kitchen yard” from a neighboring property (Ling 1997: 25). While the plan may thus appear to be completely different from an elite atrium-type house, careful consideration of all the evidence may show that similarities in the use of space exist. In fact, previous authors have posited some such correlations. It should be noted that many of the rooms in this house show evidence of breaching and possible looting after the eruption (Allison 2006: 289 ff).

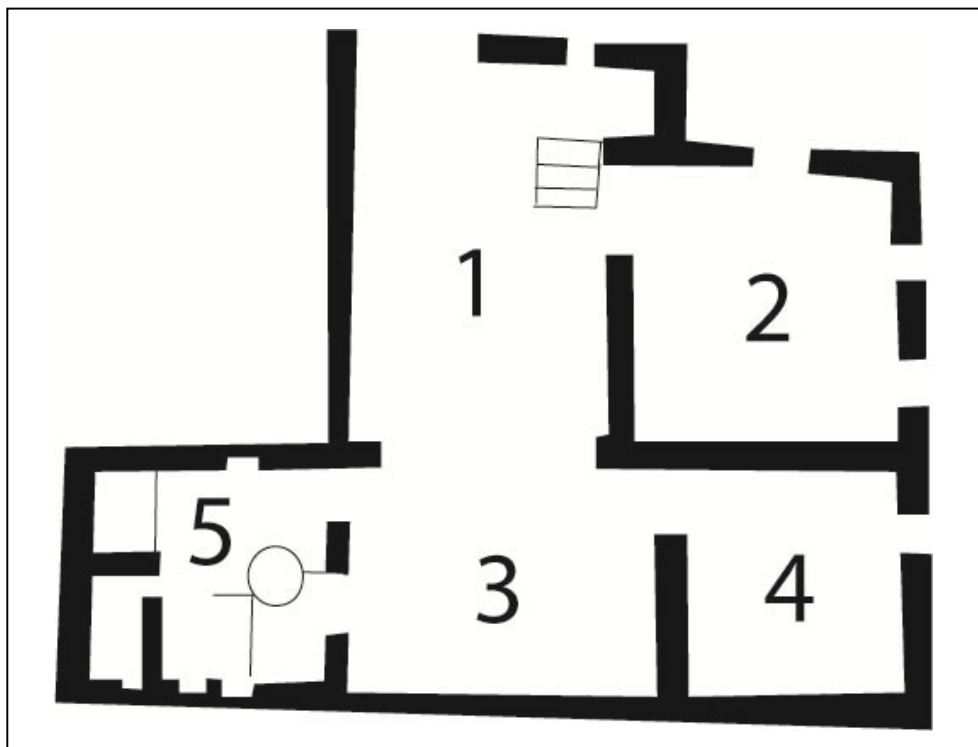


Figure 5: House I 10, 1 plan

Table 2

Artifacts by Room and Category: House I 10,1

	1	2	3	4	5	UF
ABLUTIONS/HYGIENE			X			X
CLOTH-WORKING			X			X
CONSTRUCTION			X		X	
DISPLAY	X				X	X
DOMESTIC TOOLS			X			X
FOOD CONSUMPTION		X			X	X
LIGHTING		X				X
MISC. POTTERY						X
STORAGE	X		X			

Ling (1997: 25) states that Room 1 “can for convenience be called an ‘*atrium*,’ though lacking the architectural pretensions and distinguishing features of traditional *atria*⁶³.” Elia (1934: 267) had no such reservations, calling this room an *atrium* and Room 3 a *tablinum*. Although the house was small and certainly less wealthy than the obviously elite Casa del Fabbro, this open room was decorated with Third-style paintings (Ling 1997: 25). There were few finds in the room, but those recorded do not contradict the idea that Room 1 functioned like an *atrium*. The bronze key found here, for instance, likely belonged to the tumbler lock of some sort of storage furniture (Allison 2006: 41); if that chest or cupboard had stood in Room 1, this would be consistent with the common conclusion that *atria* were places of general household storage (Allison 2004a: 70), especially when that storage required security (Dwyer 1991: 28)⁶⁴. The other finds recorded from Room 1 were fragments of door fittings and a glass vase fragment of unknown quality (Allison 2006: 41-42). The paucity of finds leads Allison to be wary in suggesting a use for the area. She concludes, however, that “it had been relatively

⁶³ He goes on to say that “the sole factor which justifies the use of the term ‘atrium’ to describe our room is its role as the nuclear space from which other rooms open.”

⁶⁴ Although the *atrium* was a somewhat open space, Dwyer believes that it was the place where commonly-needed items, as well as money would be stored: “as the great majority of locks were found in the vicinity of the *atrium*, we can conclude that this was the most secured part of the house, hence the most secure.”

unencumbered with furnishings” and likely served as “a reception and access area,” thus much like an elite *atrium*, though there is no evidence for the kind of household production evident in many larger houses.

Room 3, however, provided artifacts such as a mortar and pestle, clay loom weights, and various storage vessels⁶⁵ (Allison 2006: 42-44). According to Ling (1997: 27-29), the decoration of this room makes it appear to be an extension of the *atrium* area, structurally, and it was in fact open to Room 1, though it may have been separated at times by a screen or “a more solid closing structure” (Allison 2006: 290). The activities alluded to by the finds of this room are more similar to what Allison expects in an *atrium*; it seems likely that Rooms 1 and 3 together provided the various functions an elite *atrium* would, including control of access, reception, domestic storage, and daily activities such as food preparation and consumption, weaving, toilet activities.

Room 4, which is a small closed room off of the “*atrium*” area⁶⁶, was referred to by Elia (1934: 268) as a *cubiculum*. It had “simple” Fourth-style decoration and would have received very little natural light (Ling 1997: 29). While the room physically matches the type of room used for private activities, that is Allison’s Type 4, no finds were recorded, which would be necessary to enable a secure identification (Allison 2006: 44). It is also possible that private rooms were located on the upper story; artifacts such as lamps and the remains of a chest were found in layers of the deposit above Room 2, for instance (Allison 2006: 291). Room 2 was a slightly larger closed room also off the

⁶⁵ This includes both mundane ceramic vessels and more decorative glass ones.

⁶⁶ I.e. Rooms 1 and 3 together.

“*atrium*.” Elia (1934: 267) believed it to be an *oecus*⁶⁷ and the few ceramic finds could have been used for dining (Allison 2006: 42).

The remaining room on the ground floor of this house, Courtyard 5, was an open area, which Ling (1997: 29) calls a “kitchen yard”⁶⁸. It was equipped with several wall niches⁶⁹ as well as basins to collect rainwater. Many of the finds from this area, such as roof tiles and amphorae, point to possible repairs or reconstruction, though Allison (2006: 291) suggests that food preparation may still have been done here at the time of the eruption.

Overall, this house appears to have been far more modest than its large neighbors. Taking into consideration its layout, decoration, and the few artifacts recorded, however, it also appears to have made use of a similar organization of space. House I 10, 1 had an open central space allowing access to other rooms, as well as containing household storage and probably domestic activities. The small rooms to the side of this area may have been used for dining and more private activities, as the rooms connected to *atria* often were in elite homes. Instead of a formal garden, it was equipped with a more practical courtyard, in which cooking and utilitarian activities such as storage and repair took place. Such activities occurred in more elite garden areas as well, but this court is different in that it appears to have lacked any function related to reception or entertaining. While the residents of this house were certainly not as well-off as the owners and occupiers of traditional atrium-type houses⁷⁰, they were able to perform many of the same

⁶⁷ “*Un oecus quadrato*.”

⁶⁸ Elia (1934: 268), too, placed kitchen activities here: “*nella piccolissima area scoperta, ad oriente del tablino, si trovano allegate la cucina e la latrina*.”

⁶⁹ These were probably meant for storage, rather than as shrines (Allison 2006: 291).

⁷⁰ There is no evidence for the occupation or trade of the residents here, which makes this less definite.

activities, possibly including entertainment in the “*oecus*,” while their use of space focused a bit more on domestic activities.

Conclusions

The most salient quality of Pompeian houses and households is the great variation which characterized their construction and use. The creation of an accurate view of any particular house requires attention to artifacts, as evidence of activity, as well as house plan and decoration. Thorough analysis of the material evidence highlights the fact that households chose different strategies to support themselves, which in turn created patterns of spatial organization within the house which differed from the elite ideal, as expressed in literary sources. While the plan of The Casa del Fabbro resembles the Vitruvian ideal to a great extent, it is clear that the last residents of the house placed far less emphasis on reception and entertainment by preferring to devote space to whatever specific economic pursuits they had chosen to follow.

In addition to enabling us to more accurately understand large “elite” homes, this integrative method may be used to examine houses that appear to be completely different from the “*atrium*-house” trope. A balanced look at the plan and decoration of House I 10, 1, with the few noted artifacts considered in context, allows us to see that in some cases at least, lower-class houses followed similar spatial patterns. Certain rooms in this house may have had similar uses to the elite “*atrium*,” and other spaces also seem to have functioned in ways reminiscent of more elite residences. A comparison between the Casa del Fabbro and this building highlights the fact that domestic tasks were performed in a perhaps unexpected range of spaces and that households at all levels of society were concerned with both social and economic purposes, to varying degrees.

Chapter 3

The Village of Karanis

It is important to expand our view geographically, as well as methodologically, in order to study domestic space and community construction in the Roman world. Already by the first century C.E., Rome's influence extended far beyond the Italian peninsula. Each region under the control of the Roman government had its own history and culture, of course, creating much diversity throughout the empire. Although scholars have generally focused on Italy in discussions of Roman culture and society, each element of the empire contributed to the whole of the Roman world. Thus, each region should be considered on its own terms, just as we examine communities closer to Rome, such as Pompeii.

The inspection of non-Italian areas has many benefits for scholars of Roman society and domestic life. The concept of "Romanization" continues to be used by many scholars to explain cultural change in the empire. This term in fact represents many often competing ways of discussing the incorporation of new peoples into the Roman sphere. While "Romanization" originally referred to a process of acculturation, in which the residents of newly conquered areas adopted Roman ideas and traditions (Keay 2001: 113), it has been redefined to refer to the process of integrating these new areas into the Roman political sphere (Keay & Terrenato 2001: ix) or to the variable interactions between "native" and "Roman" culture (Benelli 2001: 7). Critical examination of various places in the Roman empire in fact shows great variability in the negotiation of new subjects with Roman culture. Often, some elements were accepted, while others were modified to fit with traditional culture and many "native" ideas remained in place. Egypt,

with its strong separation between Roman citizens and other people, presents a very good example of this differentiation. As I will show in this chapter, while the administration of the province changed dramatically with Roman influence, most of the common people continued to live in traditional ways, especially with respect to their family and domestic life.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, many sites outside of Italy are able to provide valuable sources not found elsewhere. Papyrus documents from Egypt have often been used to illustrate Roman legal practices and to provide economic and demographic data which is unavailable for other areas in the empire. The official documents used for these purposes allow us see how the people of Egypt were viewed by Rome and can be useful by providing information on occupations and families among the common people. More personal documents such as letters allow us to answer the question of who the residents of Roman Egyptian towns were and what they did on a daily basis in their own words. Many of these documents have been recovered from the village of Karanis, which is a well-preserved site with areas roughly contemporary with Pompeii.

I will begin this chapter by exploring the integration of Egypt into the Roman empire and the complex mixture of peoples and cultures in the province. Next, I will use official and personal papyri to discuss the residents of Karanis in detail from various perspectives, in order to create a much fuller picture of individuals, kin groups, and households than is possible at Pompeii. Finally, I will examine the houses at the village, providing a context for the lives of these people, in addition to providing further information about domestic life. By using the archaeological evidence from Karanis, which is not as complete as that of Pompeii, in addition to the exploiting the unique

potential of the papyri, I will be able to answer the same questions about community and daily life. At Karanis, however, I will be able to do so with a more individual and insider perspective. In addition, this study will allow comparisons to be made across the empire, and for the creation of a more complete idea of Roman domestic and social life.

The Province of Egypt

Long before its establishment as a Roman province, Egypt had passed from Pharaonic rule into foreign hands. While previous non-Egyptian rulers had tended to follow native customs⁷¹ and to remain more or less separate from the indigenous people (Davis 1951: 18), the Ptolemies, the Greek successors of Alexander the Great, set a new pattern of rule, immigration, and cultural mixing. While the Ptolemaic “pharaohs” kept themselves fairly separate from their subjects (Bard 2008: 291), they encouraged the settlement of Greek mercenaries and immigrants within their new domain (Gazda 1983: 8). Thus, by the time Augustus added it to the empire, Egypt was inhabited by groups of Egyptians, Greeks, and mixed Greco-Egyptians, as well as Jews who were centered in the capitol city of Alexandria. This movement of people continued into the Roman era, as veterans of Roman auxiliary units would settle in the more prosperous villages of Egypt (Lewis 1983: 22).

The Greek settlers brought many of their own institutions to Egypt, including social organizations such as gymnasia. They continued to speak Koine Greek (Davis 1951: 43), which was used for government affairs even under the Romans (Lewis 1983: 16). The Greek language spread throughout rural areas as well; many Egyptians were

⁷¹ For instance, the Hyksos, who ruled in the Second Intermediate Period, used Egyptian writing, administration, and titles (Bard 2006: 199) and sometimes even took Egyptian names (Davis 1951: 18).

illiterate⁷², but those who could write most often did so in Greek (Lewis 1983: 81).

Hellenic and Egyptian customs were mixed in certain areas, especially religion. The new cult of Serapis, for instance, seems to have combined the traditional Egyptian deities Osiris and Apis and to have used Greek worship practices (Davis 1951: 45).

Under the Romans, the administration of Egypt changed significantly. Augustus and future emperors did not rule directly, as the Ptolemaic pharaohs had, and in fact rarely visited the province. Rather, a Roman prefect governed from Alexandria at the head of a complex bureaucracy. (Bard 2008: 296) The entire province was divided into three parts, each of which was assigned a Roman *epistrategos*, who governed from Alexandria. Underneath this, the administrative system of the Ptolemies was maintained, with each of the smaller regions, or *nomoi*, managed by a Greek *strategos* in its *metropolis*. On the lowest level, in the villages, scribes in the employ of the *strategos* kept tax records and dealt with other government business. (Winters 1933: 3)

The Romans took pains to improve the efficiency of the Ptolemaic tax system as well (Lewis 1983: 15). The *laographia*, or poll tax, was a flat rate tax on all males from age 14 to age 60, but the amount of payment varied by legal category; the rural population paid it in full, while metropolitans owed a reduced amount and both Roman citizens and the residents of the Greek cities were exempt entirely. (David & van Groningen 1952: 23) In order to more effectively collect this tax, Augustus instituted a census that was to be taken every fourteen years (Lewis 1983: 156). A number of taxes apart from the *laographia* existed as well – on land, goods, services, and sales (Lewis 1983: 159). Taxes were collected by officials who bid for the job; these “tax-farmers”

⁷² Bagnall & Frier, using tax declarations, many of which were written “on the part of the declarant” by another person, suggest about 1/3 of Roman Egyptians were literate.

paid a contracted amount to Rome and often undertook the responsibility in order to profit personally, sometimes by dishonest means (Lewis 1983: 161).

Most preserved documents originating from Egypt, including those related to taxation, are written in Greek after the time of Alexander (David & van Groningen 1952: 2), though both Latin and Egyptian were still used as well (Millar et al. 1969: 183). The documents themselves range from administrative orders to letters to famous Greek literature (David & van Groningen 1952: 3). While the find spot for many is no longer known, due to the method of their retrieval and to their sale, others can be connected to certain houses. Some have been discovered in what are called “archives” or groups of documents from a single location, which consist of various documents often relating to a certain person or family (c.f. Lewis 1983: 69-73). While even the documents found in situ are usually treated with an eye for content exclusively, it is important to understand these items as both literary sources and archaeological artifacts, especially when considering an archive. Papyri may be more beneficial to researchers when their location is taken into account; a group of various letters in a house, for instance, suggests that the documents in question had great importance to the person saving them, even though the documents in a given archive may span generations. Recognizing that papyri form artifact assemblages as well, therefore, can allow further conclusions to be drawn from them about what people valued and wished to remember.

Many of these papyri have been found in the Fayoum region of Egypt. This area, the Arsinoite *nome*, contains some of the only fertile land in Egypt not found on the banks of the Nile and made up a tenth of the cultivated land during the Roman period (Lewis 1983: 107). It was settled quite early in predynastic Egyptian history (Bard 2008:

47), but was not populous until the Ptolemaic period when the agricultural potential of the soil was exploited on a large scale (Gazda 1983: 8). At this time, the area around natural lake basin was filled with irrigation canals (Lewis 1983: 107). Though these fell into disrepair by the end of the dynasty, in the early Roman period Octavian ordered the system to be repaired and regularly maintained to ensure productivity of grain for Rome (Lewis 1983: 111-2). This project was so successful, and the land so rich, that the Arsinoite *nome* seems to have been subjected to a higher poll-tax as a result (Wallace 1933: 127). One of these Arsinoite villages was Karanis, a mostly agricultural settlement to the northwest of Lake Qarun (Gazda 1983: 8).

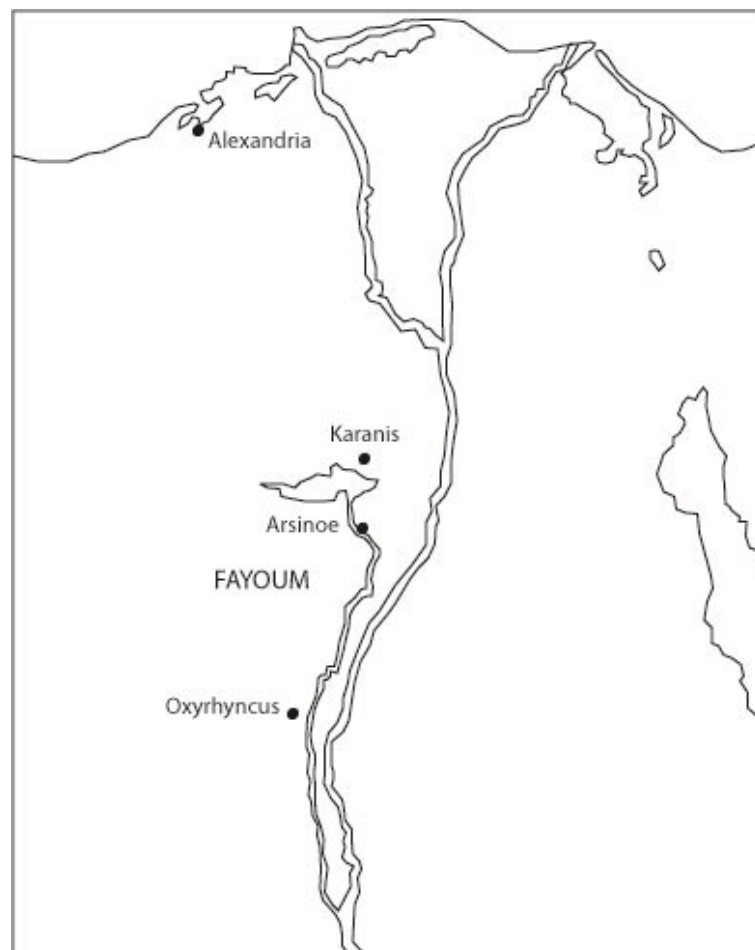


Figure 6: Karanis and the Fayoum

Karanis: Site History and Excavation

Karanis was especially well-preserved and has been the focus of extensive excavation. This mound site was originally known to academics as a source of papyri documents, which were being uncovered and sold to collectors by residents of the area (Boak & Peterson 1931: 1). These papyri, in fact, were the motivation behind the first excavations at Karanis in the late nineteenth century. Francis W. Kelsey, with the University of Michigan, undertook the first extensive and archaeologically rigorous excavation in 1925. (Gazda 1983: 2) This team was concerned with artifacts, buildings, and the evolution of the site through time, allowing them to give context to the documents and to gain more knowledge in general about life in Greco-Roman Egypt (Boak & Peterson 1931: 1). They paid close attention to chronology, although continual modification of the mud-brick houses made this complex. This careful work allows modern scholars to understand the evolution of the town throughout the centuries before its abandonment, and also allows individual buildings to be discussed with historical context. The team also carefully catalogued and preserved artifacts⁷³, while professional photographers documented the finds extensively and kept explanatory notes⁷⁴.

Karanis was occupied from the third century B.C.E. to the end of the fifth century C.E. (Gazda 1983: 1). The settlement, which stretches about a kilometer east to west and 600 meters north to south, is located on a limestone ridge bordering a *wadi*. While the western and eastern edges of the village appear to have been occupied for only short periods of time, the center was rebuilt extensively over the centuries, resulting in a 14

⁷³ Records for a selection of these artifacts are available at the Kelsey Museum website: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/research/museumarchives>

⁷⁴ Archives of these photographs and more general excavation records are maintained by the Kelsey Museum as well.

meter tall mound. Unfortunately, this area had been greatly disturbed, so most modern excavation has taken place on the outer edges. (Boak 1933: 2-3)

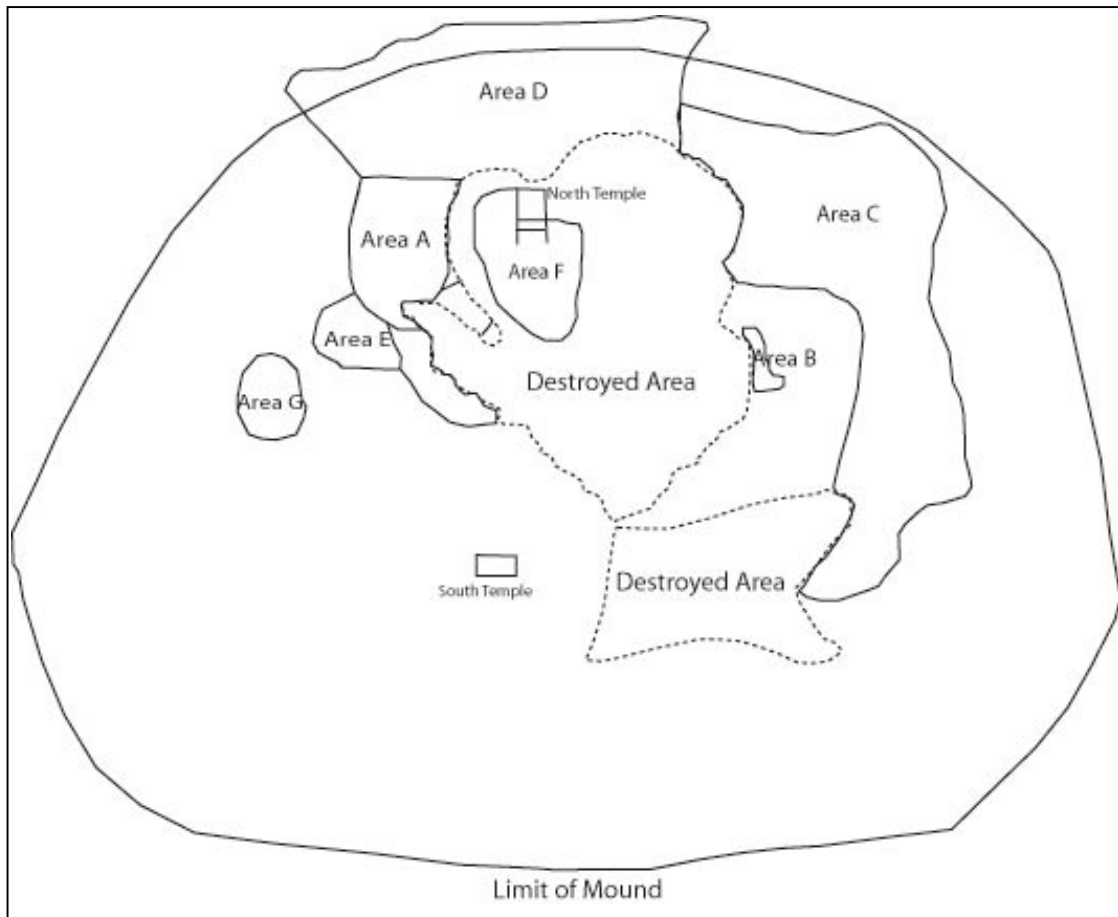


Figure 7: The site of Karanis (adapted from van Minnen 1994: 238)

Early excavations, especially those prior to the University of Michigan expedition, were concerned mainly with the temples of Karanis. The South Temple, dating from the first century B.C.E. was built in traditional Egyptian forms using stone (Gazda 1983: 34). The North Temple was built during the Roman period, when Karanis as a whole expanded fairly rapidly, but was probably built in Egyptian style. Aside from state granaries (Gazda 1983: 11), there are no other buildings known which were certainly public, though one house may have in fact been a Mithraeum. A recently

discovered bath complex could have been either public or private. (Alston 1995: 119-120)

Previous scholarship on Karanis has tended to characterize it wholly as a poor and self-sufficient village:

The overall aspect of the village was one of a teeming populace, many of them living just above subsistence level. Men, women, children, and domestic animals huddled all together in cramped and crowded quarters. (Lewis 1983: 67)⁷⁵

It is evident from written sources that a vast majority of the residents were Greco-Egyptian farmers, working both on local plots and also fields “considerable distances away” to grow grain and other cash crops (Lewis 1983: 65) for Rome and for their own consumption (Gazda 1983: 10). These farmers lived in fairly simple mud-brick houses which were often crowded together. Many supported themselves further with in-town garden plots (Gazda 1983: 13)⁷⁶, small animals raised in courtyards (Boak & Peterson 1931: 34), and pigeons housed in mud-brick dovecotes, while some people purchased certain imported goods such as wine and olive oil (Gazda 1983: 13-14)⁷⁷. It is important to question this simplistic view of Karanis. When we consider together all the various sources found in the well-preserved architecture, papyri, and other artifacts, we see that there was much variation in the lifestyle of the town’s residents.

⁷⁵ While this statement generalizes all Roman-era “peasant villages” in Egypt, the same idea is applied to Karanis specifically as well. See for instance Gazda (1983: 9): “Although no more than a rustic agricultural village in the Fayoum oasis, [Karanis] looms large for us precisely because it provides a microcosm of life as it was lived by ordinary people in Egypt under Greek and Roman rule.”

⁷⁶ These orchards and gardens were more expensive to maintain. Many were state-owned and leased to cultivators. Nevertheless, it is seen from tax records that nearly half of Karanis’ residents did rent garden land. (Gazda 1983: 13)

⁷⁷ The birds would have been useful for fertilization of soil as well as for food (Gazda 1983: 14).

Repopulating Karanis:

Demography and Official Documents

As noted above, the papyri from Karanis are a unique and very useful resource, which allow a closer look at the residents of the village and the possibility of moving past the picture of these people as merely “simple farmers.” Documents related to taxes and the census provide the state’s perspective on the people of Karanis and Roman Egypt more broadly. Following Alston, I find it important to begin by defining several analytical terms. A “family” will be considered to be a group of relatives living together. The closely related term “household” refers to the co-residential group acting as a legal and financial unit. (Alston 2002: 69) In some cases, a family could be split into more than one household, and was registered thus for tax purposes (Alston 2002: 75). A “houseful,” however, will designate all the people living in a given house, which may include several families and households, or may be more closely equivalent to a family and household (Alston 2002: 69).

Officials kept records of the census through declarations filed by each household⁷⁸ (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 1). The mostly male⁷⁹ declarants were compelled by an edict to register *εατών εφέστιον*⁸⁰, which most likely referred merely to the place in which they had previously been registered to declare for the census (Bagnall & Frier:

⁷⁸ In this case, the definition of “by household” is unclear. The term in the Greek documents, “*κατ’ οικίαν*” can refer to either the physical house or the more ambiguous grouping of occupants (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 57-8). From the use of the term in census documents, Bagnall and Frier (1994: 13-4) define a household as “one or more individuals operating as a unit.” though they point out that this may be within a fraction of a house, rather than by house, and that all properties of the household were declared, not necessarily a single dwelling. It is also important to consider that a given household may not have consisted of related family; entire households of tenants existed, in addition to scattered lodgers listed with the households in which they were living.

⁷⁹ Women could evidently own property in Roman Egypt, however. Their holdings were either appended to their husband’s declaration or individually, sometimes even without a legal guardian, here called a *kyrios* (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 13).

⁸⁰ This is defined by Bagnall & Frier (1994: 15) as “fiscal domicile.”

1994: 15). These documents generally included formulaic statements of the declarant's name and patronymic, often with his paternal grandfather, mother, and mother's patronymic as well, followed by the properties and possessions which needed to be declared for various taxes. The "heart of the declaration" was the list of people who made up the declarant's household. At most, these lists included each person's name, status, age, profession, and certain physical markers such as scars, as well as often their relationship to the person declaring. Declarations from villages, including those in the Arsinoite nome for which we have much evidence, were rarely this complete. (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 24) Government officials then glued together individual declarations to be kept as a reference, while the demographic data was used to create comprehensive lists (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 22-7).

While the age of male Egyptians would have been the most important piece of information in the eyes of the Roman state, the other information was evidently of interest as well. It seems likely that status and family relationships were noted in order to reinforce the different legal groups recognized by Rome (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 29). Many regulations existed to keep Romans and non-Romans distinct, many of which dealt with marriage and inheritance, and which were enforced by fines (Lewis 1983: 32-3). These social or ethnic proscriptions were rigid and generalizing; any person living in Egypt who was not a Roman citizen or a resident of a "Greek" city such as Alexandria was either a "Jew" or an "Egyptian" according to Roman regulation (Lewis 1983: 31). From the perspective of the people themselves, however, the question was undoubtedly more complex. Greeks and indigenous Egyptians often intermarried, and the children were given Greek names, as this was considered to mark higher status (Lewis 1983: 32).

The fact that this information was collected by the state and preserved allows us to see the way the residents of Karanis were categorized by the Romans, which undoubtedly affected the way they thought of themselves. We can also use the more detailed returns and documents to get an idea of the way families and residences were structured. It is clear from the social and ethnic categories, and the manipulation of these groupings by reference to Hellenistic traditions, that there were many variations in status among the people of Karanis, as well as active attempts by some people to improve their position within the system.

All of these documents provide modern scholars with a wealth of information, not only on the Roman tax system and legal status distinctions. Perhaps the most common use has been for demographic study. An understanding of the size and composition of Karanis is a good start in the study of its people. Arthur Boak (1955: 158) used the Tax Rolls from Karanis for the years 171 to 174 C.E. to make an estimation of the structure of the community. These documents were composite lists of taxes received daily from each individual, usually for the *laographia*. They list somewhere from 575 to 644 Greco-Egyptian adult males⁸¹. Boak used age and sex data from early 20th century China, India, and Egypt to form suitable ratios for comparison and to obtain a total suggested Greco-Egyptian population for the town of 1800 to 2200 people. (Boak 1955:159-60) This number would include slaves as well, though slaves made up only 3%⁸² of the entire population of the town (Geremek 1983: 40). This is a fairly small number compared to

⁸¹ I.e. those of an age to pay the poll tax, 14 to 62 years.

⁸² Geremek arrives at this number by counting the specific male slaves mentioned in the Tax Rolls.

that found in all the data from Roman Egypt analyzed by Bagnall and Frier (1994)⁸³, but the fact that slaves existed at all in Karanis points to a certain amount of wealth among the select group of slave owners⁸⁴ and thus socioeconomic variation to a limited extent.

Although Roman citizens were not subject to the *laographia*, they paid other taxes, especially on property, and were listed in census and tax documents (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 11). The “Roman” men of Karanis were for the most part veterans of the Roman auxiliary, many of whom had been “Egyptian” residents of Karanis prior to enlisting. According to Hanna Geremek (1969: 102), “before embracing military service, nothing distinguished them from the farming population⁸⁵.” Upon leaving the service, veterans and their families were awarded all of the privileges and “prestige” of Roman citizenship. Few of them would have been migrants from Italy (Winter 1933: 5). It is nearly impossible to determine which “Romans” were originally Greco-Egyptian soldiers and which were not, but all those with Roman legal status were considered to form a coherent status in the eyes of the Roman state, and will be approached thus for my purposes.

Boak identified 72 of these men by their *tria nomina*⁸⁶ in the Tax Rolls. He assumed that each of these men belonged on average to a family of five, and obtained the number 360 for the Roman population at Karanis at this time. (Boak 1955: 160) This

⁸³ 11% of the people listed in all the available preserved returns, mostly from the Arsinoite and Oxyrhynchite nomes, were slaves. The percentages were higher in metropoleis than in villages such as Karanis, however. (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 46-8)

⁸⁴ In the entire data set, slaves are reported in only one sixth of households, which, coupled with the fact that almost all slaves functioned as domestic servants, leads Bagnall & Frier to see slaves as a general measure of household wealth (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 49).

⁸⁵ “Avant d’embrasser le service militaire, rien ne les distinguait de la masse de la population agricole.”

⁸⁶ Roman male citizens had a *praenomen* (a personal name), a *nomen* (equivalent to a modern surname) and a *cognomen* (which marked his *gens* or ancestral line). Upon receiving citizenship, a “foreigner” would take up this type of Roman name. (Johnston 1903)

places the Roman group at 14 to 17% of the total⁸⁷. It is worth noting that these Roman citizens owned significantly larger tracts of land than Greco-Egyptians (Geremek 1969: 60-1). 95 % of the gardens of less than half of an *aroura*⁸⁸ were owned by Greco-Egyptians and the most common category, between one half and two *arourai*, was owned by Greco-Egyptians more than three-quarters of the time. More than half of the large five to fifteen *arourai* tracts were owned by Romans, however, although they formed a minority of the population.

Table 3
Land ownership in Karanis from 171-173 C.E.

	less than 1/2 an <i>aroura</i>	1/2 to 2 <i>arourai</i>	2 to 5 <i>arourai</i>	5 to 15 <i>arourai</i>
% Roman-owned	5	23	50	55
% Greco-Egyptian-owned	95	77	50	45
% of total properties	19.8	59.9	14.7	5.6

Note. Based on “Tableau X” and “Tableau XII” (Geremek 1969: 117-8).

This allows us to conclude that the smaller group of Roman citizens were often wealthier and may have been considered to have had a higher social status. This ought to be reflected in the houses as well; wealthier households are likely to have displayed their status in various ways and to have had more resources with which to do so. Van Minnen goes so far as to suggest that the size and wealth of Karanis’ veteran population was

⁸⁷ Later scholars have arrived at vastly different figures for the total population – van Minnen, for instance claims that even 25,000 is too low and that Boak was guilty of an extreme oversight in his assumption that only one document would list the entire population (van Minnen 1994: 234 and 247) – but I will proceed with the assumption that the ratio of Greco-Roman to Roman populations would not vary too much whether this is entire population or only a fragment of it.

⁸⁸ An *aroura* was a Greek unit of measurement, used in Egypt at this time, corresponding to the amount of land that could be plowed by a team of oxen in one day, or roughly 2700m² (Dollinger 2000).

enough to set the town as a whole apart from other towns in the Fayoum as “a little less of a typical Egyptian peasant village and a little more of a Roman town with a large number of moderately wealthy inhabitants who were no peasants (1994: 234).” The presence of a locally-defined elite is evident from the demographic and economic evidence, which shows that the characterization of Karanis as a “peasant village” is simplistic and inaccurate. Instead, we should recognize that groups existed among the residents with different backgrounds, resources, economic strategies, and lifestyles.

Families and Personal Documents

Another type of papyri, letters and documentation of inheritances and land transfer, allow us to glimpse more clearly the view of the people themselves about their identities and relationships. The personal correspondences especially, which were often kept by recipients in archives, present a rare opportunity to gain a perspective on the interactions between individuals and their families. Letters show the importance of familial relationships to the residents of Karanis. Many letter-writers would “salute by name” numerous relations, including parents, siblings, in-laws, nieces and nephews, as well as grandparents if they were living (e.g. P. Mich. III, 203). This allows us to see which relationships were considered to be close connections, which often extended beyond the nuclear group, and allow us to infer that kin often lived close to one another, if not within the same house.

Letters from soldiers abroad to their families at home create an especially poignant picture of the emotional bonds between relatives at Karanis. An epistle from the officer Iulius Apolinarius to his mother Tasoucharion in the year 108 C.E. is an especially good example. He begins with this expression of extreme homesickness:

Apolinarius to Tasoucharion, my lady mother, many greetings. Before all else, I pray for your good health, as it is my wish to make obeisance to you...in good health...For each time I remind myself of you, neither do I eat, nor do I drink, but I cry...(P. Mich. VIII, 465).

After a brief explanation of his duties and the statement that he had tried to send her some Tyrian pottery with the extra money he had, he continues to express his filial concern for her:

Therefore I ask you, my lady, to be...and merrily joyful; for this [his present location, possibly Arabia] is a good place. For if you are grieved, I am uneasy...I ask you without delay to reply to me concerning your health, so that I also may have consolation. (ibid.)

Following the general pattern of these letters, Apolinarius concludes with a “salute” to his sister or sisters, his grandmother, his brother, and several others without stated relationships to him. His last statements are “I greet all those at home. I pray that you be well and happy (ibid.).” It is clear that people from Karanis formed lasting and deep relationships with their families and friends, and that these relationships continued to be important when they were away from each other. The additional material concern illustrated by his intention to send Tyrian wares to Tasoucharion will be discussed below.

The many writers who express consternation at not receiving responses to their letters highlight the real concern these soldiers felt for their families. This example was sent by centurion Iulius Clemens to his brother Arrianus, who was enlisted elsewhere:

This is now the third letter I am writing you, and you have sent me no reply, although you know that I am worried if you do not write me frequently about your

affairs, and in spite of the fact that many persons come here from your vicinity. I therefore ask you, brother...to write to me about your well-being, which is my prayer to all the gods. (P. Mich. VIII, 484)

Clearly the affection and bond between even adult siblings was very strong. Often, in addition to simple requests for news or well-wishing, more practical connections between siblings can be seen in letters⁸⁹. In a particularly intriguing letter, a woman named Apollonous writes to her brother (possibly brother-husband, for which see below) to update him on affairs at home. During his absence in the army, she is caring for his children, who are “kept busy with a teacher,” in addition to managing his lands and collecting his rents. (P. Mich. VIII, 464). This letter also shows that women in Karanis were capable of overseeing property and had authority and responsibility in the family.

Economic and material concerns characterize a number of these missives, in addition to emotional declarations and the sharing of news. To return to a previous letter, Apolinarius asks his mother to send him linens, “for there is none here and the weather is very hot (P. Mich VIII, 465).” This sort of request is ubiquitous in letters from remote relatives to their family members at home. One soldier, Saturnilos, living in Nubia and about to engage on another tour of duty, acknowledges his receipt of “monthly allowances” and a jar of olives from his mother Aphrodous in Karanis. He also asks “Take care of my children's pigs for me so that if my children come they may find them” and mentions his wish to send his “children and their mother,” presumably to live with Aphrodous while he is on active duty. (P. Mich. III, 203) People evidently expected and received aid, monetary or otherwise, from their relatives even when they were great distances away. Apolinarius’ wish to send his mother a gift of Tyrian pottery also

⁸⁹ Further examples of the ties between siblings will be discussed below.

demonstrates that becoming a soldier could have benefits for one's family; there were opportunities in the army to acquire a wider variety of goods to send home and eventually to generally improve one's economic circumstances.

Private documents other than letters, including wills, provide information on family life as well. Many of these show that properties and houses were jointly owned by related people. In one inheritance case, properties owned by the recently deceased parents were split between three children such that the cultivatable lands (grain fields, an orchard, etc) were divided evenly, and the son was to inherit one house, while the two daughters were each to own half of a second house (P. Mich. IX, 544).

In another papyrus, three brothers, aged 46 to 65, petition a *strategos* to find their missing fourth brother so that he may repay them for his share of the taxes on the land they cultivate and own together. They say that they "happen to have paid in behalf" of this younger brother Petesouchos "because he has disappeared." (P. Mich. IX, 524). Flight as a form of tax evasion was quite common in the Roman era in Egypt, when poverty made payment impossible. The families of such people would usually report their disappearance, while claiming that the fugitive relative had left "leaving no property" in hopes of preventing tax collectors from victimizing them. (Lewis 1983: 163-4) If Petesouchos was indeed evading taxes, his brothers seem to have undertaken a different strategy, placating the state by paying his share, and only then requesting a search so that he might "discharge his debts." This letter points to another interesting facet of life in Roman Egypt; arrangements in which brothers owned property, often houses in which they resided with their families, was fairly common, and is referred to as a *fréchère* (Alston 2002: 75). These examples show that the ability to call on one's kin for aid and

labor seems to have gone hand-in-hand with more general familial obligations. In this way, the residents of Karanis were able to build complex support networks, based in kinship and emotion, which also helped them to care for each other and sometimes to make profits.

Furthermore, it is possible to see that the way people defined their relationships with family members was intricately tied to the system of property transfer and other economic concerns. The archive of Kronion, who lived in Tebtynis, a village in the same *nome* as Karanis, in the early second century C.E., provides a very good example of this. His children, Kronion II and Taorsenouphis, were married, evident from a recorded divorce in which Taorsenouphis is referred to as Kronion's "wife till now, who is also his sister born of the same father and of the same mother." After their separation, Kronion II must repay her for jewelry that was sold during their union, and she is to maintain her own property (Lewis 1983: 71-3). Whether or not "endogamous marriages" such as this in fact occurred has been hotly debated⁹⁰. Close consideration of the census returns allows the issue to be seen more clearly. Bagnall and Frier (1994) determined that close-kin marriages of various types occurred in Roman Egypt and that brother-sister unions accounted for about one-sixth of all marriages. They continue to state that these marriages were "real," in that they nearly always produced children (127-8). Close-kin marriage was found throughout Egypt in the early centuries C.E., but was more common in the Fayoum than elsewhere. They were most concentrated in the Arsinoite *nome*, where they made up 26% of the total recorded (129).

⁹⁰Remijsen and Clarysee (2008) defend the position that brothers and sisters could in fact get married in Roman Egypt. They counter the argument that the brother-husbands in these marriages were in fact adopted by showing that the usual reasons for adoption, such as the need for a male heir, did not apply to cases known from the papyri (62).

While there are several suggested motivations for this⁹¹, I believe that the adoption of this custom by less wealthy Egyptians may have served perceived economic needs, as it would have prevented them from splitting their small amounts of property among their children after death⁹². This solution would not have been needed by the wealthier class, including some residents of Karanis who are seen from the papyri to have owned multiple houses along with other properties (as in P. Mich. IX, 544, discussed above). These same people likely rented out portions of land and buildings. It was a common practice for farmers to lease land, either from the state or from individuals, and much privately owned cultivated land was located at other villages, making it more likely that the well-off families would arrange for others to care for these properties (c.f. Lewis 1983: 66-7). Instead, they may have resided in one of their houses and cultivated some of their land, while leasing the rest to generate revenue. Marriage between brothers and sisters was thus both an effective strategy for non-elites to maintain their family claim to property, but was also often motivated by sincere emotions.

. . .

This multitude of different documents, often categorized together as “papyri,” allows modern scholars to access a variety of perspectives on the lives of Karanis’ residents. Census and tax records present the view of the Roman state, with its interests in control and revenue, which was imposed on Egyptians and their families. While people were categorized and kept track of in specific ways by the state, they may have seen

⁹¹ Bagnall and Frier (1994) discuss several possibilities. They note that the “standard theory” is that brother-sister marriages were undertaken to avoid the necessity of providing a dowry (131). They also consider that early marriage with an easily available partner may have been attractive and that the marriages may have been arranged by older family members (133).

⁹² This would have a similar function to the practice of keeping property in common amongst brothers (Alston 1997: 34-5), or to the apparently common practice of adopting a son to whom property could be passed (Remijsen & Clarysse 2008: 57).

themselves differently, which can be seen in unofficial documents. Private correspondences allow an unprecedented view into the intimate lives of people on Roman Egypt, while records of marriages, divorces, inheritances, and property transfers provide a glimpse of the various ways people thought about their own relationships and possessions. Families were not only close emotionally; they were bound socially and economically as well. In fact, the two aspects of familial relationships appear to have been of roughly equal importance to the people of Karanis. It is also clear that homes and other property were of great concern to these people, when we read of their management and the steps taken to pass them within the family. With this in mind, I will proceed to give a general survey of the houses of Karanis, which were the setting for the familial relationships mentioned above, as well as the daily activities in which this thesis is interested.

Domestic Architecture at Karanis

Nearly all of the buildings at Karanis were made of mud brick, a ubiquitous building material in Egypt at all points in its history, which allowed changes to the houses to be done easily. (Husselman 1979: 33) Wood, though perhaps more common in the region than it is now, was rare and it was used sparingly to frame doors, articulate some niches, and strengthen the exposed corners of structurally important walls (Husselman 1979: 34). Stone was used even less, though it was available locally, and is found most commonly in staircases (Gazda 1983: 21) or to strengthen foundations (Husselman 1979: 35).

Interior surfaces were usually covered with grey or yellow mud-based plasters. Some were painted black with white lines outlining each course or each individual brick

(Husselman 1979: 35). I suggest that this wall treatment may have been intended to look like wood. A limited amount wood was set into the walls as decorative horizontal lines in several buildings (Husselman 1979: 36). Wood was a luxury in Egypt, and thus an imitation of it may have been a way to enhance the perceived quality of the house and to allude to a higher status for the residents. If so, this treatment would have had a similar function to so-called First Style painting in Greek and Italian houses, where walls built of small stones were painted to resemble large blocks of expensive and rare marble (Clarke 1991: 33).

Painted scenes, however, are uncommon in houses, and those that exist consist mainly of deity paintings on the inside of wall niches (Husselman 1979: 36). It is important to keep in mind, however, that Karanis was not preserved quickly, but rather the buildings fell into disuse and disrepair slowly over centuries. Much of the original décor may no longer be evident, as paintings may have faded and valuable materials would have been retrieved for reuse. The people of Karanis were certainly able to “invest surplus wealth” in the decorative elements of their houses, through various types of figurines, textiles, painting, and other methods. (Alston 2002: 57-8)

The layout of houses in Karanis varied widely. The practice of constant rebuilding and alteration, common in mud-brick buildings, added to this erratic character (Gazda 1983: 20). In addition, areas such as courtyards changed ownership often (Alston 2002: 59). Larger houses, which were normally constructed with more care, might have had seven or more ground floor rooms in addition to underground storage rooms. These larger houses also tended to have a second story, or several further stories, connected to a single spiraling staircase. These upper floors often did not extend the entire area of the ground

floor, and are thus referred to as “towers.” According to papyrological evidence, houses in the villages of the Fayoum had at most three stories (Alston 2002: 59), while the smallest and presumably poorest houses seem to have consisted of only one or two rooms (Husselman 1979: 67).

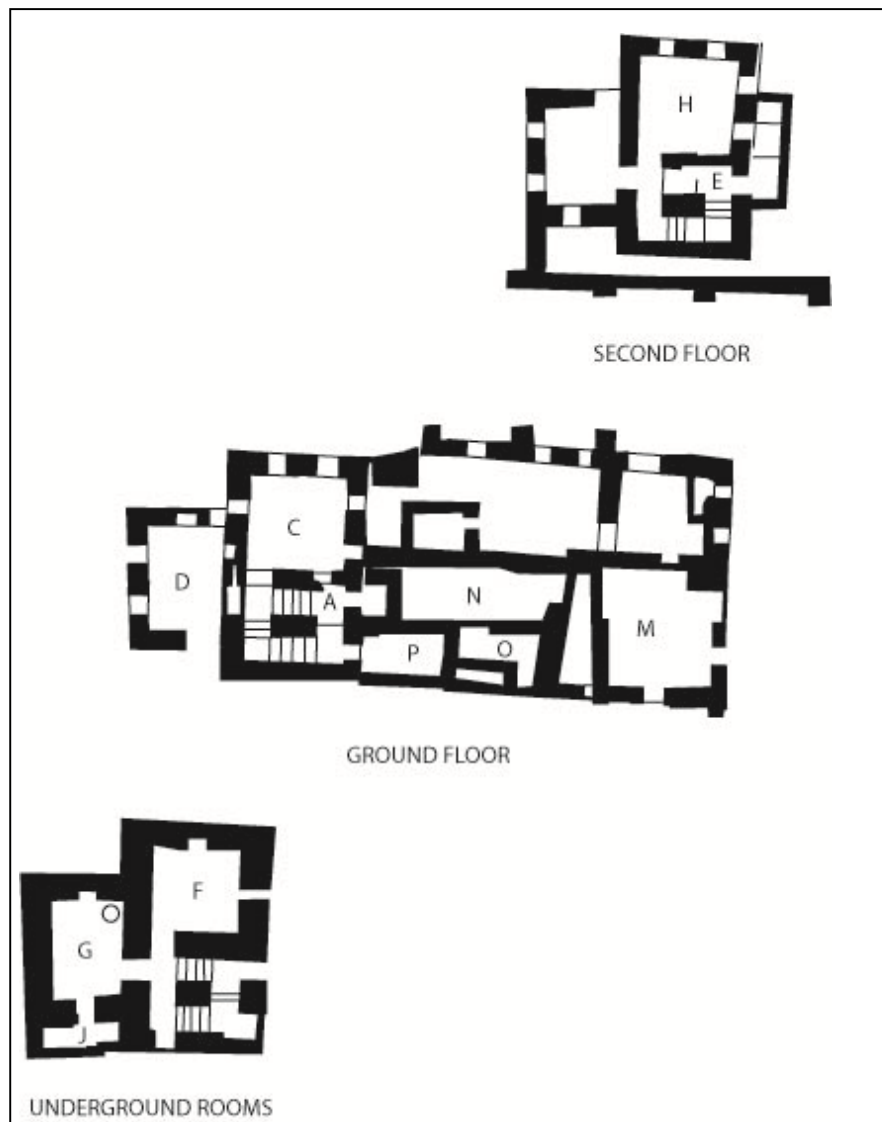


Figure 8: House C42

House C42 is a good example of one of the larger houses. The plan of this particular house is complex, due to renovations and additions throughout its existence, but because of this fact, it serves to represent the houses of Karanis well. One entrance to

House C42 was found at the courtyard M, which seems to have been wholly connected to this building, rather than being shared. Several storage spaces were located in this area of the house (N, P, and O) which joined the tower. There was another entrance into Room D on the other side of the house. This room joined the stairs for the tower and underground rooms, which mirrored those of the ground floor. Presumably storage was located in the underground area, where it would be more secure, while more private space was located upstairs and domestic work occurred on the ground floor, especially in the court.

Storage was often located in simple niches that functioned as easily-accessible cupboards and also in more secluded underground rooms. Some items, such as coins or glassware, were further protected in pots sunken into the floor of these areas. (Husselman 1979: 47-8) High in the walls were small windows which were intended to allow limited amounts of light and fresh air into the houses, though they were often shuttered or filled with fabric. Any other light would have been provided by various forms of oil lamps. Some were glass cones set into tripods, while most were more utilitarian terracotta forms, which were often placed in wall niches or hung from pegs. (Gazda 1983: 25)

Courtyard spaces were widespread in Karanis⁹³ and seem to have been where most of the important daily activities of the family were performed. They were often not exclusively connected to any particular house, and ownership could be shared by several households. Some, however, were not accessible by multiple houses or from the street, and thus appear to have belonged to one building, though these were far less common. Archaeologically, courtyards are defined as walled in spaces that are open to the sky, which were usually located on the edge of a house. Various types of ovens and fireplaces

⁹³ According to Husselman “every house in Karanis had its courtyard or shared one with its neighbor (1979: 49)”

were the most common fixtures, often with separate installations for cooking and baking bread. (Husselman 1979: 49) Storage bins for grain and animal fodder were also common, as well as pens and feeding troughs for small animals (Husselman 1979: 51-2). Mills and olive presses, among other tools, were found in many courts (Husselman 1979: 53-4), pointing to the variety of domestic tasks which took place in these courts.

There were two different words used for court areas in papyri, however, and these seem to have corresponded to slightly different spaces. Alston identifies the *aule* as the “workyard” most often seen at Karanis, which was usually located peripherally and more easily accessed. These spaces were often described in documents as containing various utilitarian structures, such as wells or storage towers (called *purgoi*). As they were regularly sold individually, *aulai* seem to have been considered to be separate from the house. A family could also own more than one of these kinds of court. (Alston 2002: 59) It is worth noting that in these cases, which are mainly known through documents relating to inheritances, the family in question often owned several houses and courts in various parts of Karanis, as well as property and houses in other villages and other buildings such as granaries and dovecotes (c.f. P. Mich. IX, 554).

The *aithrion* was differentiated from an *aule* in the papyri, though a given house could have both types of court. *Aithria* were much more common in urban settings, unlike *aulai*, which were evenly distributed. (Alston 2002: 59) They were never sold separately, suggesting that they were located centrally in houses and were more integral to the house as a whole⁹⁴. They could apparently be used for the same activities as an *aule*, especially when the house in question had an *aithrion* but not an *aule*; Alston refers

⁹⁴ Though Alston states that the difference is not evident in the archaeological remains at Karanis (Alston 2002: 60), a court that is entirely contained would correspond to an *aithrion*, while Court M in House C42 (Figure 8), accessed from the street, is more like an *aule*.

to a papyrus which discusses “domestic equipment” in an *aithrion*. In the Oxyrhynchus plan, the court space was labeled “*atrium*.” Alston points out that the words have the same root, which may explain the use of the Latin word here, but also that an *aithrion* likely did not have the same purpose as an *atrium*⁹⁵. Like Pompeian *atria*, however, both kinds of court at Karanis were multipurpose areas which were highly valued by their owners. The location of so many daily activities in courts would make them the locus of social interaction as well, both within households and between households when they were owned in common.

Case Study: “The House of Socrates” (B17)

The integrative house-by-house approach is somewhat difficult to use at Karanis, as ground-laying work of the type Penelope Allison undertook at Pompeii is scarce. Resources such as artifact lists are difficult to obtain and plans for many buildings were not published. The utility of such a methodology has been seen, however; papyrologist Peter van Minnen has called for just such an approach. For instance, he advocates for researchers “not to discard the papyri” and to use them to contextualize the archaeological data (van Minnen 1994: 249). Van Minnen chose as an example B17, the so-called “House of Sokrates,” as it contained one of Karanis’ largest papyrus archives, showing that in the mid-second century C.E., House B17 was the home of a tax collector named Sokrates. Although there is no plan available, van Minnen was able to use unpublished excavators’ notes as well as the photographer’s commentary. Van Minnen (1994) focuses his discussion on blank papyri, which he believes Sokrates kept on hand for use in his work (247) and three inkwells found in rooms E and F, which are a

⁹⁵ It is unclear, however, just how Alston defines the Italian *atrium*; he seems to refer only to its social or ideological significance.

testament to the higher-than-average literacy of the man, and perhaps of his sons as well, who may have followed in his professional footsteps. Remnants of family life – toys – are mentioned briefly as reminders of the women and children mentioned sparsely in the papyri. (248) The B17 makes an ideal case study, as it possible to use various types of sources - personal letters, tax records, and archaeological evidence – to discuss Sokrates' household.

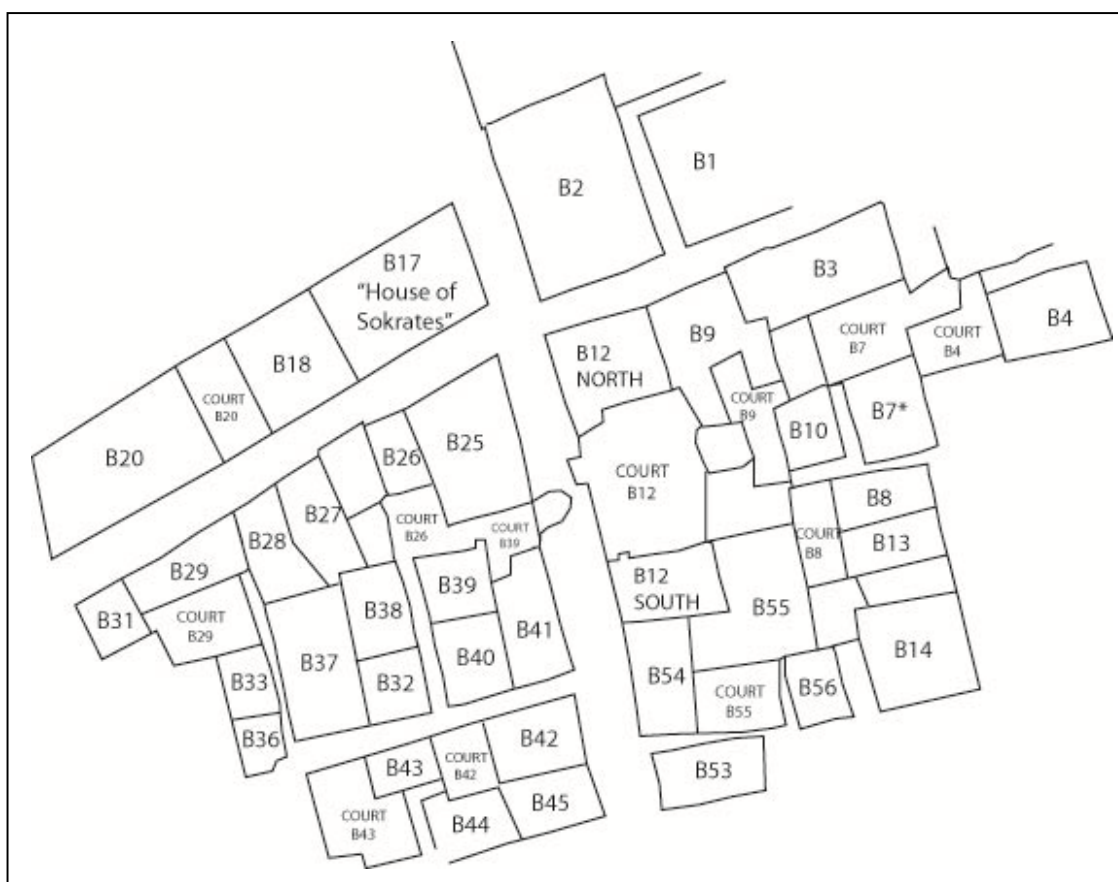


Figure 9: Area G

The location of House B17, called Area G (Figure 9), was excavated in the 1926-7 season (Boak & Peterson 1931: 7-8 and see Plan II). The archaeologists dated the B level in this spot to between 117 and 235 C.E. using coins, papyri, and ostraka (9). The only mention Boak and Peterson (1931: 27) make of House B17 specifically is that the

floor of its Room E was brick⁹⁶ and a lidded pot was sunken into the floor, which was a common trait of houses in Karanis (see above). From van Minnen's artifact list, we can see that the house had at least seven rooms⁹⁷. He uses this fact, in addition to photographs of the house, to estimate that House B17 had a ground floor area of 120 square meters, making it fairly large for Karanis. (van Minnen 1994: 239)

The first question, then, is who was living in this house? We can learn about Sokrates himself from his archive. The documents he kept in Rooms E and F attest first and foremost to his official positions as both a collector of taxes, which was a lifetime appointment, and also as a census official in 145/6 and 159/60 C.E. (van Minnen 1994: 242). As a collector, he would have been able to charge about 10,000 drachmas in fees each year, making him quite wealthy for residents of a small village. Sokrates had other interactions with the community, however, which also show his wealth and influence. In one letter, for instance, his aid is requested by a woman named Artemis for legal representation, most likely taking place in Alexandria:

I ask you, if you can, send me one of your group, since I need him to be my legal representative, for a woman is not permitted to engage in a lawsuit without a legal representative. Know that if you help me the affair will have a successful issue.
(P. Mich VIII, 507).

Evidently Sokrates and whoever his associates were had a reputation for being able to help in law cases. It is possible that he had an established relationship with Artemis and had aided her in the past, as well. Sokrates was also involved in the leasing of land, such

⁹⁶ This is significant, as most floors in area G were mud and some were mud-covered brick, while few were brick alone. Rarer still were stone floors (Boak & Peterson 1931: 27).

⁹⁷ Presumably, these are all on the ground floor.

as a date palm grove (P. Mich IX, 564), and other properties which he most likely rented out for cultivation rather than working it himself (BASP 22, 323-5).

Scholars have debated whether Sokrates had children with a Roman woman named Sempronia Gemella. This assertion, made originally in 1991 by Strassi Zaccaria (see van Minnen 1994: 241, footnote 62), is based on a birth certificate, which had been recorded at Alexandria and was found in house B7, for her twin sons *ex incerto patre*. (van Minnen 1994: 241)⁹⁸. Their relationship to Sokrates is strengthened by both the names of the children in the birth certificate, Marcus Sempronius Sarapion and Marcus Sempronius Socraton (P. Mich. III, 169)⁹⁹ and the proximity of the two houses (Figure 7). The fact that the document was found in B7 suggests that Gemella, and perhaps the children, did not live with Sokrates, an idea that seems to fit with the fact that, as a Roman woman she could not “openly claim Sokrates as the father of her children.” Both M. Sempronius Sarapion and M. Sempronius Socraton are later known to be government officials, but are not connected explicitly to house B17 by documents found within it. (van Minnen 1994: 241-2) Sokrates had a daughter as well, who married a Roman citizen named Valerianus, with whom she moved away from Karanis at an unknown date (P. Mich. VIII, 505).

While we cannot tie artifacts to specific people, we can use the archaeological evidence to make some suggestions as to the composition of Sokrates’ household. A bone hair pin found in Room B seems to point to the presence of a woman in the house. Tools

⁹⁸ Winter (1933: 54) had asserted with no reservation that Gemella’s guardian, another Roman citizen, Gaius Julius Saturninus, was the father, but there does not seem to be much evidence for this.

⁹⁹ It was fairly common among Roman Egyptians for the oldest son to be named for his paternal grandfather, and a significant amount of second sons were named for their maternal grandfather or father (Remijsen & Clarysse 2008: 57-8). Van Minnen therefore points to the fact that Sokrates’ father was named Sarapion, which could mean that the first son listed was named for him, and the second for Sokrates (van Minnen 1994: 241).

for the production of cloth, such as a spindle whorl in Room G and both weaver's pegs and a fragmentary weaver's comb from Room F, may also have been used by women. (van Minnen 1994: 250-1) Gazda (1983: 15) notes that households may have crafted some cloth for their own use. Textile production, however, was also a highly skilled and specialized occupation in Roman Egypt and was the second most common occupation in the Arsinoite nome¹⁰⁰. Learning to weave in this capacity required apprenticeship and the trade was performed by men and women, both slave and free (Winter 1933: 69); at least one weaver in the Arsinoite nome was a male slave (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 71). It is also possible to see the existence of children in the artifacts. Several items are listed as "toy wheels (van Minnen 1994: 250-1);" toys such as wheeled animals, dolls, and miniature tools are fairly common at Karanis (Gazda 1983: 30). A particularly interesting find from this house is a "pot sherd with a child's drawing (van Minnen 1994: 250)¹⁰¹."

Table 3
Artifacts by room and category; House of Sokrates

	B	E	F	G
CLOTH-WORKING			X	
DISPLAY	X		X	X
DOMESTIC TOOLS			X	X
GLASS	X		X	X
LIGHTING			X	X
PERSONAL ITEMS	X	X	X	
POTTERY			X	X
TEXTILES	X	X	X	
TOYS	X		X	
WRITING		X	X	

In all, the artifact assemblage from Sokrates' house is large and varied, further suggesting his prominence and higher social standing in Karanis. Included in the finds

¹⁰⁰ According to the tax documents, only farming was more widespread than weaving (Bagnall & Frier 1994: 48).

¹⁰¹ I was unable to locate a record of this particular artifact.

were coins, which many residents of the town may not have used at all since taxes were paid in grain. In addition, jewelry such as decorative buttons and blue glazed beads, several figurines which were also fashionably blue-glazed, decorative items such as glass and pottery, and the blue-glazed ink pots mentioned previously were found (van Minnen 1994: 250-1). All of these objects are clearly not necessities; rather they were a way to signal a higher socio-economic rank. The presence of working implements, such as the wool-working tools, as well as two stone mortars, fragments of basketry, a plumb bob, and a group of seven sandal soles suggests another way to view House B17. It was not merely the home of an official, but a place where domestic production occurred, as in most Egyptian houses of the time. While Sokrates' household may not have been quite as self-reliant as the farmers of the village, the residents evidently did work to support themselves.

Conclusions

By leaving behind the geographical privileging of Rome and Italy to include areas such as Egypt, we are able to further characterize the diversity of social life in the Roman empire. While the houses of Karanis and the settlement as a whole are very different from Italian towns, we can discover that similar concerns were held by households in both areas. The culture of guest reception and entertainment, seen in literature and archaeology, may be lacking in the Egyptian examples, but social life is illuminated through documentary evidence. These show the lasting strength of kin ties in addition to friendships and bonds based on the need for assistance, much like the patron-client relationships of Roman Italy. The papyri also allow us to see that Egyptians and Roman citizens in Egypt were concerned with property ownership and inheritance just as much

as Italian Romans were, though they may have used different methods for acquiring and transferring it, including close-kin marriages and splitting properties between their children.

This study of Karanis, and of the House of Sokrates in particular, is thus a good example of the danger of simplistically generalizing a town such as Karanis. Each household and each family likely had different resources and ability to support itself. They all desired different things and had varying tastes, and acquired what they could. While many residents of the town were in fact subsistence-level farmers, many others, such as land-leasing Roman citizens or a wealthy Greco-Egyptian like Sokrates, may have lived much different lives. In any case, a full picture of life in Roman Karanis cannot be seen unless we consider all the evidence available.

Chapter 4:

Conclusions

Roman scholars, both historians and archaeologists alike, tend to focus their attention on only one type of evidence, regardless of the questions they are asking. Philologists turn to literary sources exclusively, while archaeologists commonly treat various types of data, such as wall decoration or house plans, in isolation as well. Each of the various types of evidence available for Roman domestic and social life, however, has its own strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, the central idea of this thesis has been that an inclusive and integrated approach to all the evidence available provides the most complete picture of Roman domestic and social life. I have hoped to show that this method allows us to mitigate the issues with our sources, and to answer basic inquiries into what sorts of people lived in the Roman empire, how average Romans lived their lives, and how individuals became part of Roman communities.

Literary works are the most commonly used type of source in the examination of Roman life. They are, in fact, our only potential source for the opinions of Romans in their own words. The preserved authors treat many topics which can be useful to scholars investigating domestic contexts. Letters such as those of Pliny the Younger mention the uses of specific rooms and the qualities that were valued in homes and villas. Authors such as Vitruvius and Varro provide us with terminology for certain spaces. Many other elite sources, such as the extensive writings of Cicero give us glimpses of aristocratic family life. These sources, however, only provide us with a partial view and need to be used with care. In my view, with an understanding of the identity of the authors, their motives in writing, and the biases in their perspective, literary sources may be used to

provide a starting point for further inquiry. Furthermore, these literary sources may be used to supplement or to try to explain findings from other types of source.

Written sources other than elite publications can be beneficial in moving beyond this restricted view to consider other classes of people. Likewise, they often present a picture that is closer to the real lived experience of the individuals who wrote them or about whom they were written. Funerary inscriptions may be useful in providing data for demographic research into life expectancy, for reconstructing kin networks, and for creating an idea of how people wished to be seen. They also frequently commemorate groups such as freedmen, who are difficult to study through literature¹⁰². Documentary sources, such as census records and private letters, were not written for publication, and thus do not carry with them the same biases. Nevertheless, there may be problems with the use of this evidence as well. For one thing, private documentary sources are preserved less frequently, since they were not widely disseminated, and when they are discovered, they are often highly fragmentary and poorly published. As we have access to only partial census data for any given time and place, demographic work is extremely difficult, and requires the construction of comparative models, with much room for error. Records of sales and inheritances may be useful in determining patterns of ownership and other matters, but if they are taken out of context, it is difficult to draw any conclusions.

Taking into consideration the many difficulties in using such documentary evidence, it is still clear that where they are extant, they can provide information which would otherwise be left entirely to speculation. The papyri from Karanis allow scholars to

¹⁰² It is important to note, however, that information in such inscriptions is often of doubtful accuracy. It seems, for instance, that adults often did not keep track of their age, while the ages listed on children's tombs are often specific to the hour, calling into question their validity as well. In addition, funerary monuments present a portrait of the deceased as they wished to be seen, or as their commemorators decided to create.

reconstruct and characterize family relations between many residents, both in an official capacity from tax and census documents and from the perspective of the people themselves in their personal letters. Complex property transfers through sale and inheritance may be traced, showing the importance of houses, and particularly courtyards, to the residents of Karanis. While many of the papyri from Karanis were removed from their findspots for sale, and thus their context was lost, others were excavated by the University of Michigan team in situ. Thus, although they are usually examined for content by papyrologists exclusively, the Karanis papyri may be seen as a bridge between documentary and archaeological evidence.

Other domestic archaeological remains can provide much information if it is approached holistically, rather than separated into specialized categories. House plans can provide some idea of the use of space and the way people thought about movement through the building. Decorative schemes may be used in conjunction with house layout to suggest which areas of the house were more invested in, which spaces were meant to be seen, and what the owner of the house wanted people to see and think of him. Rather than studying artifacts in a vacuum, with certain types examined by specialists, as has commonly been done, they ought to be considered in their proper context. The addition of artifact assemblages to research on Roman domestic space allows much greater accuracy and detail in the study of domestic activities and the use of space. The picture that emerges is one of great adaptability; while this may seem surprising, hints of this nonspecific use of space may be seen in literary sources, providing an example of the way evidence may be used in tandem to more fully explain domestic practices.

In addition to integrating all of the archaeological evidence, it is necessary to consider each house as a unit of inquiry. Allison's work on identifying room types (cf Allison 2004) is highly beneficial to scholars of domestic life, as it provides a framework for the interpretation of other houses. Much other work on Roman domestic space has focused on either specific types of evidence (e.g. Clarke 1991 on decoration) or has examined houses from the exterior as units in a neighborhood (e.g. Wallace-Hadrill 1994). Understanding the houses themselves and the use of their interiors is necessary, however, before turning to their integration into the wider community.

It is evident that this holistic approach can illuminate Roman social life to a much greater extent. It is simply impossible to uncover the answers to certain questions, such as whom exactly the owner of a given house was, or what specifically happened in a space at any given time and why. I believe that this integrative method, however, allows for a much more accurate and complete discussion of whom average Romans were, how they managed their subsistence, how they interacted with one another in domestic settings, and how communities were formed. By examining both Karanis and Pompeii, I have been able to expand the inquiry, and to highlight the variability of Roman social life throughout the empire. Evidence such as papyri at Karanis allowed a different perspective than is possible at Pompeii, although the conclusions drawn from such sources are specific to Karanis. Pompeii's preservation and long history of scholarship, on the other hand, allow more information to work with. In this way, each site adds to a composite understanding of social life in the empire.

. . .

Having established the utility of this method, I will now turn to the conclusions I have been able to draw at each site I examined. While it is not possible to draw out a complete idea of life for the entire Roman empire in this way, both Pompeii and Karanis add to the whole picture. In fact, although each site presents different specific circumstances and strategies, my discussion of both has brought out the great adaptability present in the Roman world. The residents of both towns were able to make conscious choices about the way they lived their lives and displayed flexibility in the methods they used to support themselves and their kin. In addition, the different evidence available at each site affected the ease with which various questions could be approached. By combining the sources and comparing both sites, however, I will be able to explicate daily life specifically in each location and more generally across the empire.

Trade and Occupation

The question of who individual residents were can be answered in different ways using the sources available at each site. At Pompeii, it is possible to characterize people by a vast array of occupations and to discuss this topic across all strata of society. Elite political life may be studied through documentary evidence such as funerary inscriptions which expound upon the career of the deceased (c.f. *CIL* X 996), building dedications which attribute construction to specific officials (c.f. *CIL* X 852), and the many graffiti which relate to elections (c.f. *CIL* IV 6625). The ways in which members of the lower classes supported themselves may be known from archaeological evidence such as workshops or tools found in houses, in addition to inscriptions and graffiti which mention various trades and *collegia* (c.f. *CIL* IV 7164). It is clear from this evidence that there were a great many ways in which Pompeians managed their subsistence, and, as seen in

the Casa del Fabbro, their lives were characterized by adaptability in adverse circumstances and by a great variation in strategies.

The same sort of plasticity may be seen at Karanis, when one leaves behind the assumption that all residents of the small village relied on farming grain for Rome. There is much different evidence here, mostly consisting of census registers (c.f. P. Mich VI, 370), records of sale and renting (c.f. P. Mich X, 585), and references in petitions and letters to land ownership and cultivation (c.f. BASP 22, 323-325). When all of this documentary evidence is considered, it becomes clear that different social classes existed in the village and that they had different approaches to making a living. While there were in fact a great many poor Greco-Egyptian farmers in the village, some people grew more specialized agricultural products such as dates. Wealthier families, perhaps mostly veterans with Roman status, rented land and buildings for profit, and certain individuals, such as Sokrates the tax collector, gained prominence and wealth as employees of the Roman state. Evidence for this may be drawn from the papyri, especially, which are a unique strength of research at Karanis.

Family and Household

Similar documentary sources illuminate the kin networks of the residents of both sites as well. For this topic, the evidence at Karanis is much more thorough. The tax rolls, which are relatively complete for certain years, note certain relationships for the people listed, especially patrilineal ties (c.f. P. Mich. inv. 4172). Personal letters, especially those gathered into archives and conserved in domestic contexts by certain people, are an unparalleled source of information. These enable us to see not only which relationships were valued by the people of Karanis, which relatives were seen to be close, and which

may have lived together, but also allow us a glimpse at the rich emotional lives of the letter writers (c.f. P. Mich. VIII, 465). From these sources, it becomes clear that the residents of Karanis remained close to their kin, including more distant relatives such as grandparents. The bonds between siblings were especially strong, as some adult siblings lived or worked together (c.f. P. Mich. IX, 524), and marriages between biological brothers and sisters were not uncommon (c.f. P. Mich. VIII, 464). This closeness between relatives was not only fortified by emotional family ties, but was used as a strategy to enable lower-class families especially to work together to survive.

Kinship is more difficult to approach at Pompeii, as the sort of private documentary sources presented by the Karanis papyri do not exist. Certain families can be traced through funerary monuments which list their relationships to one another, including the name of the deceased person's father, or the identity of the living relative who oversaw the commemoration. Otherwise, most of the conclusions or assumptions scholars have reached regarding Pompeian families and households have been drawn from literary sources. While these apply most closely to elites in the city of Rome, it is necessary to use whatever evidence is available to suggest answers to the question of who composed households at Pompeii. In general, elite Roman and Pompeian families seem to have been mainly nuclear family groups with slaves and possibly freedmen and adopted children. The household is seen to have been engaged in domestic work and sometimes industrial work to support itself, much as the residents of Karanis often worked together with their families.

Domestic Space

While the houses at the two sites have very little in common, due to their separate traditions and resources, examination of both allows us some idea of the context for interaction within households. While Pompeian houses were previously understood mainly in terms of guest reception and status display to outsiders, more attention to artifacts, spatial organization, and household activities allows us to examine the less public areas of the house, as well as the mundane uses of spaces usually associated with ritualized reception or extravagant dining. Here again, we can see an impressive adaptability of space in Pompeian houses, both elite and modest. The same spaces, such as the open hall or “*atrium*,” may have had a multitude of uses at different times and by different people. Rather than being simply open spaces used for display, they were in fact the location of storage, especially of valuables, in addition to probably housing activities such as clothworking. Other rooms, such as “*cubicula*” present both archaeological and literary evidence for use in a wide variety of activities, including sleeping, guest reception, and domestic work. Both types of source also show that dining rooms in many elite homes were used only in certain seasons, with storage or other activities taking place in them at other times.

While the houses of Karanis are somewhat more difficult to study, the artifacts found in the House of Sokrates can be used to complexify our idea of what life in the village was like. The many decorative items such as figurines highlight the desire of the houses’ residents to display their wealth, while the ink wells point to Sokrates’ official position and to his literacy. Mundane objects such as shoe soles and tools indicate that work was done in the house, regardless of his higher socio-economic position. The

houses in general display the arrangement and use of space in this settlement. Storage of valuables was often placed in more secure underground rooms, while private activities such as sleeping seem to have occurred on upper floors. Both of these tendencies show that the residents of Karanis chose different solutions to concerns that were also evident at Pompeii. Courtyards were the location of an array of daily tasks such as cooking and animal feeding; as they were in addition often shared spaces, they must have been the locus for a good deal of social contact among and between households.

. . .

The approach outlined in this thesis allows Roman communities to be understood starting with their smallest units, individuals and households, and building up to wider social networks. One commonality that emerged from the consideration of both sites is the need for flexible or adaptable strategies with which the people could approach their subsistence, relationships, space. While sources such as Cicero (e.g. *Off.* 1.150-151) focus on political careers as the only suitable choice for a Roman man and archaeologists focus on farming as the most obvious occupation at Karanis, I have hoped to show that people at both Pompeii and Karanis had many options and chose the strategies they found best to sustain their lives and their families, to make profits, and to maintain property. While the avenues available to them were dependent to a certain extent on their location and circumstances, it is clear that people had a great degree of freedom in constructing their lives. I have also tried to support the idea that all members of Roman society are worthy of investigation, including all statuses and locations. Considering the settlements of the Roman empire in this way creates a more all-encompassing and more accurate picture of what life was like for Roman people.

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